THE ADVENT

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The Advent

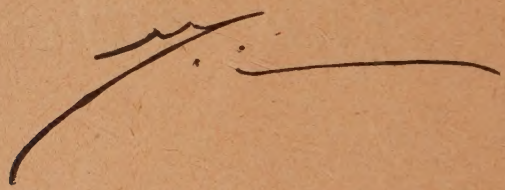
The more you grumble, the more your pains will increase.

★

It is no use thinking that one is very sincere. It is useless to think that one is not sincere. What is useful is to be sincere.

★

They who have faith will go through.



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The eyes of love gaze starlike through death's night,
The feet of love tread naked hardest worlds.
He labours in the depths, exults on the heights;
He shall remake thy universe, O Death!

Savitri, Book IX, Canto 2 — SRI AUROBINDO

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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - - *Sri Aurobindo.*

EDITORIALS*

TO LEARN AND TO UNDERSTAND

IT is one thing to learn (*apprendre*), quite another to understand (*comprendre*). In learning you take in a thing by your surface mind and it is a thing that comes in from outside like a foreign body; it is put into you, almost driven and forced into you. You do not absorb it, make it wholly your own. If you are not mindful, leave it aside for sometime, it goes clean out of your memory. Understanding a thing, on the other hand, means, you absorb it, get it into the stuff of your being, you live it in your consciousness within. When you have understood a thing you never forget it; it has become an element of your consciousness. Years and years might have passed, yet the thing would be as clear and vivid as it was on the first day. Why do you forget so easily the lessons that you learn—with pain and difficulty—from books or at school from teachers? It is because you simply

* Based on Mother's talks.

learn, but do not understand. You retain in your brain the words, the outer formula or forms, you note down the information; but what they stand for, their import and inner law, the living truth escape you totally. You read Einstein, read over and over again his formulas and equations and even commit them to memory—learn by rote; but after a time, if you lose touch with them, they vanish from your mind or become very vague and misty and you have to start again. That is because you learnt Einstein simply as a lesson, whereas if you entered into the perceptions these forms embody, the inner principles that determine them, if the Einsteinian consciousness became in some way your consciousness, then you would have understood and never forgotten. It would not be a lesson but an experience. What is needed, then, is this inner awakening by which you live a thing, identify yourself with it, become one with it and not simply meet or make a nodding acquaintance only with it. Unless there is this awakening or openness, as we say, in the consciousness, however much a lesson is thrust into you, it will not enter deeply enough. You may learn, like a parrot, but you will not understand, it will pass over your head and soon be forgotten.

Indeed it was not very much necessary for the ancient sages and occultists to try to hide their knowledge in an obscure language, in codes and symbols and ciphers for fear of misuse by the common uninitiate; even if they had expressed their knowledge in ordinary language, ordinary people would not have understood it at all. It would be like my speaking to you in Chinese, you would make nothing of it. One comprehends only what one already possesses, that is to say, you must have within you something at least of what you want to know and understand, something corresponding to it, similar in nature and vibration. That is what I mean when I say that you should be open, your mind and consciousness should be turned and attuned to the object it wishes to seize; it must have some light in it in order to receive the light outside and beyond. If it is mere obscurity, the light does not light; even if it manages to come it departs soon or is engulfed in the darkness.

The human mind can seize things only in three dimensions. A three-dimensional knowledge is its normal possession. But there is a fourth and a fifth dimension (which some intellectuals in Europe have begun to guess at): indeed there are at least as many as twelve dimensions in reference to the present creation. We cannot readily picture a four-dimensional object, a fifth dimension borders on the bizarre and beyond that it is all a blank to the human consciousness. If I spoke of these multi-dimensional experiences, what would you make of them?

For example, you read and hear much and constantly of the Divine. What is He or It to you in reality? Something vague, misty, wordy. The perception is not concrete to you. You can doubt, deny, refuse credence as you like. But if you once experience it, hold it in your inner being and consciousness, in however small way, however little of it, if you get the direct contact in whatever manner—well, the thing is unforgettable, it lives, lives for ever. If the whole world denies and scoffs, you are unshaken, you smile at the world, for you know what you know.

What then is the way to this experience, to this opening in the consciousness? The Presence is there, the Light is there, the Grace always leans down to you, surrounds you. On your side you have to make a corresponding gesture. You have to ask for the thing sincerely, whole-heartedly, aspire for it tirelessly. You have to ask for it persistently, without losing faith or trust; you have to go on perseveringly without counting the time taken.

There is an iron door there nailed and fixed. It has to be broken open. It is the door that shuts you within your narrow ego-consciousness. You have to throw down that barrier and widen yourself out. You have to will for it, exert for it with a settled constancy. There is the pressure on the other side too, the pressure of Grace. Your aspiring will meeting the Grace will surely make the necessary opening in the dead wall.

THE COMING OF SUPERMAN

Is it said that when the supramental descends, it will come with such an overwhelming and irresistible force that all humanity will be changed forthwith, that is to say, all men whether they wanted it or not, sought for it or not, would be automatically transformed? It cannot be so: it is a comfortable doctrine putting a premium on laziness and inertia.

There is no necessity of all men turning supermen, the normal human race disappearing altogether. Mankind need not become extinct like the ancient Mammoth and Mastodon in order to give place to Superman. Both the races can dwell together; earth is wide enough. Man has appeared; for that reason the ape has not disappeared, although it is said man came out of the ape genus. The superman will come and live with his new law of life; man too will continue with his human dharma. Not only so, they need not be separated into water-tight compartments, there may be interaction or interchange between the two. With the coming of Superman there will naturally be a descent of harmony and peace and happiness and

good will into the earth's atmosphere and mankind is likely to be benefited by it. The conditions of life will be changed and will affect man's life too. An element of light and joy and tranquillity will enter into humanity's normal dealings. And man, on his side, may offer his services as the recruiting ground of the super-race. Furthermore, the whole of Nature being a unified movement, no level of creation being totally separate from others, the change may very well touch the animal and even the vegetable kingdom. The plant may put on, for example, a luminous or greener tint and the animal may develop a happier and livelier spring. There may be less scarcity, dearth, aridity, less convulsions and catastrophes on earth.

Always, however, exceptions are possible. Even now, where conditions of life are happier and things are expected to be more smooth and harmonious, there exist people who are by nature so obscure, quarrelsome and turbulent that they are not touched at all and go on in their way finding always occasions to quarrel and fight and create trouble. They will be in the midst of the new humanity as Hottentots or Headhunters—aborigines and savages—are today in the eye of civilised humanity.

TOWARDS REDEMPTION

As I have often said, creation is the self-objectivisation of the Supreme Divine; it is the supreme consciousness putting itself out of itself so that it may look at itself. In so doing—in self-objectifying and self-dividing—it scattered itself abroad: the one infinite multiplied itself into infinite atoms. Not only so, in detaching itself from itself the consciousness became the very opposite of itself: consciousness became unconsciousness, spirit became matter, delight became pain, knowledge became ignorance, and light becamc darkness. Boundless universality was the essential nature of the Divine; now it got clotted into the knots of egoism upon which is based this inconscient creation. In the midst of this utter negation, this denial by the universe of its origin, the Divine Love descended and lodged itself in order to bring back the erring creation to its lost home. The Divine Love became involved and entangled in the Inconscient, became one with it; only so could she (it was indeed the Divine Mother in her Grace) suffuse the inconscient universe with her own substance and transmute it into its original nature. The first effect or visible sign of this descent or divine infusion is the emergence of the psychic or the soul element in the material body: it is the speck of consciousness imbedded in matter, inhabiting the apparently dead particl

or aggregate of particles, which continually grows in and through its relation of action and reaction with its surrounding unconsciousness, and at the same time extending its light into that darkness transforms it gradually into what it was originally at its source.

*
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The origin of creation is an individualisation—the manifestation or emanation of many, as units, out of the undivided and indivisible Single. It meant freedom for each unit to choose: the individual became, so to say, a unit of freedom. The immediate result, however, was not very successful, apparently, that is to say. For the individual unit chose to follow a path exactly opposite to its origin: the individualisation happened as if an element shot out of the infinite unity and flung itself in its momentum, as far away as possible, to the other pole. That is how the one spirit became the infinite particles of inconscient matter. The purpose and problem then set was to bring back the straying elements to their source and origin. The work was long travail. It took and it is taking even now ages and ages for the one Being who could do the thing to prepare slowly, mount the steps gradually along which creation slid down, recover the ground painfully and achieve the hidden purpose, vindicating amply the deviation and the fall. Through devious ways, long windings, arduous marches the spirit of evolution laboured through millenniums: it was the instrument utilised by the Divine Grace.

The original individual was a hard concentrated point of ego, concerned wholly and absolutely with itself. So a situation of give and take was brought about so that even to exist meant to exist through others. Human society began in this way. The solitary human animal for its own sake had to come out of its solitariness, take to a mate and thus gradually bring up a family. The wall of egoism was broken to that extent, its scope extended. This enlargement of the ego continued—still continues—increasing the content of the unity. From the family the human ego enlarged into the tribe, and the tribal ego has now enlarged into the nation. Larger and larger aggregates are being formed in place of the original individual unities. The nations too are now approaching and interpenetrating each other and in many ways the whole of humanity has begun moving as an aggregate. The individual has thus learnt to find himself in the life of humanity as a whole. He has to look up—or will soon have to look up—to the whole creation as one existence in and through which he has to exist. Thus the universe is

recovering its original indivisible unity, but having gained something in the process; for it is now no longer the featureless unity at the source but an enriched and multiple unity in expression. Furthermore the individual can proceed yet beyond. He has to and now is able to, not only in his individual but in his collective consciousness—turn back and move straight to its original unity: he can establish direct contact, commune and unite with the Divine Himself from whom it came and strayed away. The ranges of ascent are within him and are in line with those outside which the universe is traversing in the path of evolution. Such is the process the Divine Grace has undertaken to fulfil the Divine's purpose in creation.

*
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The earliest sense of "ego" or "I" is limited and confined to one's own self as against others and other things. It is then that one has the feeling of want and asks for things he has not. He has shut out from his wingspread men and things, of his own accord, to enjoy his individual free will: he is now compelled to ask of them materials to enjoy, to grow and increase, even to exist. On the other hand, if you enlarge yourself, if you identify yourself with all, then you find all things within yourself, you have no need to go out and seek for them, you have no feeling of want. Whatever is needed to be brought and utilised for a definite purpose or in a particular circumstance, at a certain time or place, is automatically presented then and there. You do not however lose your real "I". Your "I" finds its "I" in all other "I"s and all other "I"s in the "I" you call yourself. You have lost your old ego, the small narrow person, and transcended and transmuted it into the cosmic and transcendental ego. The Divine is that ego and that individual person. In reality it is the Divine alone who is that, in the supreme and truest sense.

SWEET HOLY TEARS*

The tears that the soul sheds are holy, are sweet; they come bidden by the Divine and are blessed by His Presence. They are like dews from heaven. For they are pure, they are spontaneous, welling out of a heart of innocent freedom. The feeling is infinitely impersonal, completely egoless:

* *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*, July 12, 1918

there is only an intense movement of self-giving, total simple self-giving. Tears are the natural expression in one who needs help, who has the complete surrender and simplicity of a child, the abdication of all vanity. Such tears are beautiful in their nature and beneficent in character. They are therefore like dewdrops that belong to heaven as it were and come from there with a sovereign healing virtue. Such tears are not "idle tears", as the English poet says in a vein of melancholy, they are instinct with a power, an effective energy which brings you relief, ease and peace. And it is not only pure but purifying, this feeling made of quiet intensity and aspiration and surrender: it is unmixed, free from any demand or need of reward or return; it is so impersonal that the aspiration is, so to say, even independent of the object for which it exists.

At a supreme crisis of the soul when there seems to be no issue before you, if you come, in the naked simplicity of your whole being, pour yourself out in a flood of self-giving, to one who can be your refuge—in the end the Divine alone can be such a one—and who can respond fully to the intensity and ardent sincerity of your approach, you come holding your tearful soul as a complete self-offering, you do not know what tremendous response you call forth, the blessing divine you bring down in and around you.

"I prepared the Feast"*

It was a banquet I prepared for men. Instead of a life of misery and suffering, of obscurity and ignorance I brought to them a life of light and joy and freedom. I took all the pains the task demanded and when it was ready I offered it to mankind to partake of it. But man in his foolishness and pigheadedness refused it, did not want it. He preferred to remain in his dark miserable hole. Now, what am I to do with my Feast? I cannot let it go waste, throw it to the winds. So I offered it to my Lord and laid it at his feet. He accepted it. He alone can enjoy it and honour it.

The Feast is that of Transformation, the Divine Life on earth. Man is not capable of it naturally, cannot attain it by his own effort or personal worth. It is the Divine who is to bring it down himself. He is to manifest Himself and thus establish his own life here below. Then only it will be possible for the human creature to open to the urgency of the new beauty and offer his surrender.

* *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*—September 3, 1919

It was not easy to prepare the Feast. I had to bear the full load of the cross and ascend the calvary. Jesus as he mounted to his destiny with the Cross on his back stumbled often and fell and rose again with bruised limbs to begin again the arduous journey. Even so, this being too had to go through many disillusions and deceptions, many painful and brutal experiences. It was not a smooth and straight going, but a tortuous and dangerous ascent. But at the end of the tunnel there is always the light. The calvary and the crucifixion culminated in the Resurrection: the divine Passion of Christ flowered into this supreme Recompense. Here too after all the dark and adverse vicissitudes lies the fulfilment of transformation. One must pass through the entire valley of death and rise to the topmost summit to receive and achieve the fullness of the glory. One must leave behind all the lower ranges of ignorance, the entire domain of human consciousness, come out of the imperfection man is made of; then only will he put on the divine nature as his own body and substance.

*
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The Cross symbolises all the suffering and difficulty, the renunciation and self-denudation that the ascent to the Goal involves. The Calvary of the Christian legend means Ascension and Resurrection is Transformation in our sadhana. The Cross is also symbolic of the Transformed consciousness. It has three branches and represents the triple Divine, the Divine in his three modes of existence. The top branch, the vertical portion above the transverse line, stands for the supreme or transcendent Divine, one who is above manifestation; the middle—the transverse or horizontal branch stands for the expanse of the universal consciousness, the Cosmic Divine; and the bottom portion, the vertical line below the transverse stands for the individual Divine immanent or imbedded in the manifestation. You will note that the flower we call transformation has a form analogous to the Cross.

SONNETS

I

THE INNER FIELDS

THERE is a brighter ether than this blue
Pretence of an enveloping heavenly vault,
A deeper greenness than this laughing assault*
Of emerald rapture pearled with tears of dew.
Immortal spaces of cerulean hue
Are in our reach and fields without this fault
Of drab brown earth and streams that never halt
In their deep murmur which white flowers strew

Floating like stars upon a strip of sky.
This world behind is made of truer stuff
Than the manufactured tissue of earth's grace.
There we can walk and see the gods go by
And sip from Hebe's cup nectar enough
To make for us heavenly limbs and deathless face.

14-3-1947 SRI AUROBINDO

* Royaler investiture than this massed assault

II

FORM

O WORSHIPPER of the formless Infinite,
Reject not form, what lives in form is He.[1]
Each finite is that deep Infinity
Enshrining His veiled soul of pure delight.
Form in its heart of silence recondite
Hides the significance of His mystery,
Form is the wonder-house of eternity,
A cavern of the deathless Eremite.

There is a beauty in the depths of God,
There is a miracle of the Marvellous
That builds the universe for its abode.
The One, in His glory multitudinous,
Bursting into shape and colour like a rose,
Compels the great world-petals to unclose.

16-11-1938 SRI AUROBINDO

[1] what dwells in it is He

HYMN TO INDRA*

1. Indra the Udgathins, Indra the masters of Rik with their thoughts of substance, Indra the voices desired.

2. Indra is made one with our being by the love of the two Bright Ones yoked to speech, Indra of the brilliance, the wielder of the thunderbolt.

3. Indra for far vision ascends in Heaven up to the sun, he manifests the mountain to all sides with those lustres.

4. Indra protect us in our store of strength and in our strong possessions, fierce with fierce raptures.[1]

5. Indra we call in great wealth, Indra in little, the thunderer assailing the Vritras.

6. Therefore do thou, O supreme, remove this film from our being and be to us unconcealed.

7. The praises of Indra the thunderer which rise from layer[2] to higher layer,[3] in all I find not his perfect praise.

8. As a yoked bull with its mate he in his might goeth to the powers that work upon us and rules unconcealed.

9. Indra who alone disposes all actions and possessions of the five planes.

10. Indra for the people we call in everything that concerns you; may he be to us absolute and free.

SRI AUROBINDO

* Rig Veda: I. 7. Rishi: Madhucchandas

[1] pulsations of being

[2] height

[3] height

ON TRANSLATING THE UPANISHADS*

THIS translation of a few of the simpler and more exoteric Upanishads to be followed by other sacred and philosophical writings of the Hindus not included in the Revealed Scriptures, all under the one title of the Book of God, has been effected on one definite and unvarying principle, to present to England and through England to Europe the religious message of India only in those parts of her written thought which the West is fit to hear and to present these in such a form as should be attractive and suggestive to the Occidental intellect. The first branch of this principle necessitated a rigid selection on definite lines, the second dictated the choice of a style and method of rendering which should be literary rather than literal.

The series of translations called the Sacred Books of the East, edited by the late Professor Max Muller, was executed in a scholastic and peculiar spirit. Professor Max Muller, a scholar of wide attainments, great versatility and a refreshingly active, ingenious and irresponsible fancy, has won considerable respect in India by his attachment to Vedic studies, but it must fairly be recognised that he was more of a grammarian and philologist, than a sound Sanscrit scholar. He could construe Sanscrit well enough, but he could not feel the language or realise the spirit behind the letter. Accordingly he committed two serious errors of judgment; he imagined that by sitting in Oxford and evolving new meanings out of his own brilliant fancy he could understand the Upanishads better than Shankaracharya or any other Hindu of parts and learning; and he also imagined that what was important for Europe to know about the Upanishads was what he and other European scholars considered they ought to mean. This, however, is a matter of no importance to anybody but the scholars themselves. What it is really important for Europe to know is in the first place what the Upanishads really do mean, so far as their exoteric teaching extends, and in a

* Old writing. Obviously, these pages were written as an Introduction to his first translations of the Upanishads—*The Editor.*

less degree what philosophic Hinduism took them to mean. The latter knowledge may be gathered from the commentaries of Shankaracharya and other philosophers which may be studied in the original or in their translations which the Dravidian Presidency, ignorantly called benighted by the materialists, has been issuing with a truly noble learning and high-minded enterprise. The former this book makes some attempt to convey.

But it may be asked, why these particular Upanishads alone, when there are so many others far larger in plan and of a not inferior importance. In answer I may quote a sentence from Professor Max Muller's Preface to the *Sacred Books of the East*. "I confess" he says "it has been for many years a problem to me, aye, and to a great extent is so still, how the Sacred Books of the East should, by the side of so much that is fresh, natural, simple, beautiful and true, contain so much that is not only unmeaning, artificial and silly, but even hideous and repellent". Now, I myself being only a poor coarse-minded Oriental and therefore not disposed to deny the gross physical facts of life and nature or able to see why we should scuttle them out of sight and put on a smug, respectable expression which suggests while it affects to hide their existence. This perhaps is the reason why I am somewhat at a loss to imagine what the Professor found in the Upanishads that is hideous and repellent. Still I was brought up almost from my infancy in England and received an English education, so that I have glimmerings. But as to what he intends by the unmeaning, artificial and silly elements, there can be no doubt. Everything is unmeaning in the Upanishads which the Europeans cannot understand, everything is artificial which does not come within the circle of their mental experience and every thing is silly which is not explicable by European science and wisdom. Now this attitude is almost inevitable on the part of an European, for we all judge according to our lights and those who keep their minds really open, who can realise that there may be lights which are not theirs and yet as illuminating or more illuminating than theirs, are in any nation a very small handful. For the most part men are the slaves of their associations.

Let us suppose that the ceremonies and services of the Roman Catholic were not mere ceremonies and formularies, borrowed for the most part from Eastern occultisms without understanding them,—that they had been arranged so as to be perfect symbols of certain deep metaphysical truths and, to produce certain effects spiritual and material according to a scientific knowledge of the power of sound over both mind and matter; let us suppose that deep philosophical works had been written in the terminology

of these symbols and often in a veiled allusive language; and let us suppose finally that these were translated into Bengali or Hindustani and presented to an educated Pundit who had studied both at Calcutta and at Nuddia or Benares, what would he make of them? It will be as well to take a concrete instance. Jesus Christ was a great thinker, a man who had caught, apparently by his unaided power, though this is not certain, something of the divine knowledge, but the writers who recorded his sayings were for the most part ordinary men of a very narrow culture and scope of thought and they seem grossly to have misunderstood his deepest sayings. For instance, when he said "I and my Father are one", expressing the deep truth that the human self and the divine self are identical, they imagined that he was setting up an individual claim to be God; hence the extraordinary legend of the Virgin Mary and all that followed from it. Well, we all know the story of the Last Supper and Jesus' marvellously pregnant utterance as he broke the bread and gave of the wine to his disciples "This is my body and this is my blood", and the remarkable rite of the Eucharist and the doctrine of Transubstantiation which the Roman Catholic Church have founded upon it. "Corruption! superstition! blasphemous nonsense!" cries the Protestant: "Only a vivid Oriental metaphor and nothing more". If so, it was certainly an "unmeaning, artificial and silly" metaphor, nay, "even a hideous and repellent" one. But I prefer to believe that Jesus' words had always a meaning, generally a true and beautiful one. On the other hand, the Transubstantiation doctrine is one which the Catholics themselves do not understand, it is to them a "mystery". And yet how plain the meaning is to the Oriental intelligence! The plasm of matter, the food-sheath of the universe to which bread and wine belong, is rendered the blood and body of God and typefies the great primal sacrifice by which God crucified himself so that the world might exist. The Infinite had to become finite, the Unconditioned to condition himself, Spirit to evolve Matter. In the bread and the wine which the communicant eats, God actually is, but he is not present to our consciousness, and he only becomes so present (here to our consciousness) by an act of faith; this is the whole doctrine of the Transubstantiation. For, as the Upanishad says, we must believe in God before we can know him; we must realise him as the "He is" before we realise him in his essential. And indeed if the child had not believed in what his teacher or his book told him, how could the grown man know anything? But if a deep philosophical work were written on the Eucharist hinting at great truths but always using the symbol of the bread and wine

and making its terminology from the symbol and from the doctrine of Transubstantiation based upon the symbol, what would our Hindu Pundit make of it? Being a scholar and philosopher, he would find there undoubtedly much that was "fresh, natural, simple, beautiful and true" but also a great deal that was "unmeaning, artificial and silly" and to his vegetarian imagination "even hideous and repellent." As for the symbol itself, its probable effect on the poor vegetarian would be to make him vomit. "What hideous nonsense," says the Protestant, "we are to believe that we are eating God!" How shall such an one know of Him where He abideth?

Many of the Upanishads similarly are written round symbols and in a phraseology and figures which have or had once a deep meaning and a sacred association to the Hindus but must be unintelligible and repellent to the European. What possible use can be served by presenting to Europe such works as the Chhandogya or Aitareya Upanishads in which even the majority of Hindus find it difficult or impossible to penetrate every symbol to its underlying truth? Only the few Upanishads have been selected which contain the kernel of the matter in the least technical and most poetical form; the one exception is the Upanishad of the Questions which will be necessarily strange and not quite penetrable to the European mind. It was, however, necessary to include it for the sake of a due presentation of Upanishad philosophy in some of its details as well as in its main ideas, and its technical element has a more universal appeal than that of the Chhandogya and Taittiriya.

An objection may be urged to the method of translation that has been adopted. Professor Max Muller in his translation did not make any attempt to render into English the precise shades of Aryan philosophical terms like Atman and Prana which do not correspond to any philosophical conception familiar to the West; he believed that the very unfamiliarity of the terms he used to translate them would be like a bracing splash of cold water to the mind forcing it to rouse itself and think. In this I think the Professor was in error; his proposition may be true of undaunted philosophical intellects such as Schaupenhauer's or of those who are already somewhat familiar with the Sanscrit language, but to the ordinary reader the unfamiliar and unexplained terminology forms a high and thick hedge of brambles shutting him off from the noble palace and beautiful gardens of the Upanishads. Moreover, the result of a scholastic faithfulness to the letter has been to make the style of the translation intolerably uncouth and unworthy of these great religious poems. I do not say that this translation is worthy

of them, for in no other human tongue than Sanscrit is such grandeur and beauty possible. But there are ways and their degrees. For instance, *etad-vai tad*, the refrain of the Katha Upanishad has a deep and solemn ring in Sanscrit because *etad* and *tad* so used have in Sanscrit a profound and grandiose philosophical signification which everybody at once feels; but in English "This truly is that" can be nothing but a juggling with demonstrative pronouns; it renders more nearly both rhythm and meaning to translate "This is the God of your seeking", however inadequate such a translation may be.

It may, however, fairly be said that a version managed on these lines cannot give a precise and accurate idea of the meaning. It is misleading to translate Prana sometimes by life, sometimes by breath, sometimes by life breath or breath of life, because breath and life are merely subordinate aspects of the Prana. Atman again rendered indifferently by soul, spirit and self, must mislead, because what the West calls the soul is really the Atman yoked with mind and intelligence, and spirit is a word of variable connotation often synonymous with soul; even self cannot be used precisely in that way in English. Again the Hindu idea of "immortality" is different from the European; it implies not life after death, but freedom from both life and death; for what we call life is after all impossible without death. Similarly Being does not render *Purusha*, nor "matter" *rayi*, nor askesis the whole idea of *tapas*. To a certain extent all this may be admitted, but at the same time I do not think that any reader who can think and feel will be seriously misled, and at any rate he will catch more of the meaning from imperfect English substitutes than from Sanscrit terms which will be a blank to his intelligence. The mind of man demands, and the demand is legitimate, that new ideas shall be presented to him in words which convey to him some associations with which he will not feel like a foreigner in a strange country where no one knows his language, nor he theirs. The new must be presented to him in the terms of the old; new wine must be put to some extent in old bottles. What is the use of avoiding the word "God" and speaking always of the Supreme as "It" simply because the Sanscrit usually,—but not, be it observed, invariably,—employs the neuter gender? The neuter in Sanscrit applies not only to what is inanimate, not only to what is below gender but to what is above gender. In English this is not the case. The use of "It" may therefore lead to far more serious misconceptions than to use the term "God" and the pronoun "He". When Matthew Arnold said that God was a stream of tendency making towards righteousness

men naturally scoffed because it seemed to turn God into an inanimate force; yet surely such was not Arnold's meaning. On the other side, if the new ideas are presented with force and power, a reader of intelligence will soon come to understand that something different is meant by "God" from what ideas he attaches to that word. And in the meanwhile we gain this distinct advantage that he has not been repelled at the outset by what would naturally seem to him bizarre, repulsive or irreverent.

It is true however that this translation will not convey a precise, full and categorical knowledge of the truths which underlie the Upanishad. To convey such knowledge is not the object of this translation, neither was it the object of the Upanishads themselves It must always be remembered that these great treatises are simply the gate of the Higher Knowledge; there is much that lies behind the gate. Sri Krishna has indeed said that the knowledge in the Vedas is sufficient for a holy mind that is capable of knowing God, just as the water in a well is sufficient for a man's purpose though there may be whole floods of water all around. But this does not apply to ordinary men. The ordinary man who wishes to reach God through knowledge, must undergo an elaborate training. He must begin by becoming absolutely pure, he must cleanse thoroughly his body, his heart and his intellect, he must get himself a new heart and be born again; for only the twice-born can understand or teach the Vedas. When he has done this he needs yet four things before he can succeed, the Sruti or recorded revelation, the Sacred Teacher, the practice of Yoga and the Grace of God. The business of the Sruti and especially of the Upanishads is to seize the mind and draw it into a magic circle, to accustom it to the thoughts and aspirations of God (after the Supreme), to bathe it in certain ideas, surround it with a certain spiritual atmosphere; for this purpose it plunges and rolls the mind over and over in an ocean of marvellous sound through which a certain train of associations goes ever rolling. In other words it appeals through the intellect, the ear and the imagination to the soul. The purpose of the Upanishad cannot therefore be served by a translation; a translation at best prepares him for and attracts him to the original. But even when he has steeped himself in the original, he may have understood what the Upanishad suggests, but he has not understood all that it implies; the great mass of religious truth that lies behind, of which the Upanishad is but a hint or an echo. For this he must go to the Teacher. "Awake ye, arise and learn of God, seeking out the Best who have the knowledge". Hard is it in these days to find the Best, for the Best do not come to us, we have to

show our sincerity, patience and perseverance by seeking them. And when we have heard the whole of the Brahmavidya from the Teacher, we still know of God by theory only; we must further learn from a preceptor the practical knowledge of God, the vision of Him and attainment of Him which is Yoga and the goal of Yoga. And even in that we cannot succeed unless we have the Grace of God; for Yoga is beset with temptations not the least of which are the powers it gives us, powers which the ignorant call supernatural. "Then must a man be very vigilant for Yoga, as it hath a beginning, so hath it an ending". Only the Grace of God can keep us firm and help us over the temptations. "The spirit is not to be won" etc...the blessing of triumphant self-mastery that comes from long and patient accumulation of soul experience. Truly does the Upanishad say "Sharp as a razor's edge is the path difficult and hard to traverse, say the seers". Fortunately it is not necessary and indeed it is not possible for all to measure the whole journey in a single life, nor can we or should we abandon our daily duties like the Buddha and flee into the mountain or the forest. It is enough for us to make a beginning.

SRI AUROBINDO

THE BHAGAVAD GITA

(*A Translation*)

CHAPTER VI

KRISHNA

WHO doeth the works he hath to do but dependeth not on the fruit of his works, he is the Sannyasin, and he is the Yogin, and not he who lighteth not the daily fire and doeth not the daily ritual. Know, O son of Pandou, that what they have called renunciation is even Yoga, since no man becometh a Yogin if he hath not renounced the imaginations of the Will. Of the sage who has yet to ascend the hill of Yoga, works are the medium, but calm is the medium of him who sitteth already on the hill-tops. For when a man has renounced all the imaginings of the Will and his heart clings not to his works and clings not to the objects of the senses, that is the true Sannyasin, that is the sitter on the hill-top of Yoga. Let a man deliver his soul by its own strength and let him not afflict his spirit to weaken it; for a man's Self is its own and only friend and its own and only enemy. To that man his Self is a friend who has conquered the Self by the Self, but when he is not in possession of his Self it worketh enmity against him like an outward foe. Now when he has mastered Self and is at peace, then the Self of him is utterly at its ease, unaffected by heat and cold, pleasure and pain, imperturbable in honour and disgrace. The Yogin whose soul is satisfied with Wisdom and discernment, the immovable sitter on his hill-top and victor over his senses, he alone is called the Yogin who hath the Yoga; and gold and gravel or stone, to him all are one substance. He who hath one heart for lover, and friend, and foeman and those who care not for him, who maketh no difference between the saint and the sinner, he is the truly great among men. Let the Yogin gird his Self continually to Yoga,

* From old writings

solitary, governed in heart and spirit, without desires and without the sense of belongings. In a pure and holy region let him set up his steady seat, neither very high nor very low, with grass of *cusha* and a deerskin thereon, and on that a robe. Then with his mind directed to one point, with a rein on the workings of his heart and senses, let him sit on the seat he has made and betake himself to Yoga for the cleansing of the Self within. He shall sit steady, holding head and neck and body in one line and motionless, and he shall keep his gaze fixed on the joining point of his nostrils, so that his eyes shall not wander over the regions; so steadfast in the vow of abstinence and purity, with a glad and calm spirit from which fear hath been driven out, with a mind under restraint, with a heart full of Me, let him sit in Yoga, giving himself utterly to Me. Even if he yoke himself so to Yoga with a governed heart, the Yogin reacheth to that Peace in Me of which cesssation in the Eternal is the summit. Yoga is not for the over-eater, neither can a man get Yoga by abstaining utterly from food, nor for him that is overgiven to sleep nor yet for him that waketh always. Whoso eateth and playeth with his mind in God, whose striving in his works, and his sleep and his waking is for Him, Yoga cometh to that man and slayeth his sorrows. When the mind is wholly under government, and stands well-tamed in the Self, when all desirable things cannot get the heart to hunger after them, then a man is said to be in Yoga. Even as the flame of a lamp in a windless place moveth not at all, such is the image men have handed down of a Yogin when he practiseth Yoga with his heart under rein. Where the heart is sucked in from its workings by the practice of Yoga, where by the strength of the Self the mind of man seeth the Self and is wholly satisfied in the Self, where his inward spirit knoweth that extreme and exceeding happiness which is beyond the reach of the senses and which the reason cannot grasp, and it cleaveth to it and moveth not from the truth of things—which when a man has won he cannot conceive of any greater gain, to which when he holds he cannot be moved there from ever by the most sore poignant grief—know that for a man's divorce from his long wedlock with sorrow, which is called Yoga; resolutely should a man set himself to that Yoga with a heart that will not despair. Let him relinquish all the desires that are born of the Will's imaginings, not keeping one back for his comfort. He must surround with his mind and force it from their delight the cohort of the senses; so with the understanding seld held well within the grasp of a strong control he must cabin in the mind to the Self and think of nothing at all. Whenever and to whatever side dart

away the infirm and restless mind thou must curb it from its journey to bring it back within the Self and tame it to obedience—for a high beatitude cometh to such a Yogi, whose mind is calmed, whose active nature is tranquillised, who has no sin, who has wholly become Brahman. Easily shall the Yogi who ever thus setteth himself to Yoga put from him the stain of obscuration, easily feel the utter bliss and the touch divine. The soul that is set in Yoga seeth himelf in all creatures and all creatures in himself, and he hath one heart for all beings that the world containeth. When a man seeth Me everywhere and all the world in Me, I am with him always and he is always with Me, and we are lost to each other never. When the Yogin becometh one with all beings and loveth Me in all creatures, though he live and move in all manner of activities, he liveth and doeth only in Me. For him I deem to be the greatest Yogin, O Urjoona, who looks alike on all beings everywhere as if they were his own self, whether it be for happiness or whether it be for pain.

URJOONA

Nay, Madhusudan, for the restlessness of man's mind I can see no sure abiding in this Yoga of one-heartedness of which thou hast spoken. For very restless is the mind, O Krishna, and turbulent and strong and hard of mouth, and to rein it in I hold as difficult as to put a bridle upon the wind.

KRISHNA

Surely, O strong of arm, the mind is restless and hard to bridle, but by askesis, O son of Coonty, and by turning away the heart from its affections, it can be caught and controlled. Very difficult of attainment is Yoga to the ungoverned spirit, so I hold; but when a man governeth himself and striveth by the right means, Yoga is not impossible to attain.

URJOONA

When a man hath faith but cannot strive aright and his mind swerveth from Yoga, and he attaineth not to success in Yoga, what is the last state of such a man, O Krishna? Does he lose this world and that other, does he perish like a breaking cloud, failing, O strong-armed, to get his

immortal seat, losing his way on the path of the Eternal? This doubt of mine must thou solve to its very heart, O Krishna, for I shall not find any other who can destroy this doubt, but only Thee.

KRISHNA

Neither in this world nor in the other, Partha, is there for that man any perdition. None who doeth good can come to an evil end, O beloved. But to the world of the righteous he goeth and there dwelleth for endless seasons and then is born again, the man fallen from Yoga, in a house of pure and fortunate men. Or else he even cometh to being in the house of the wise, in a land of Yogins, for such a birth as this in this world is one of the hardest to win. There he getteth touch again with the mind he had in his former body, and with that to start him he striveth yet harder after perfection, O delight of the Kurus. For he is seized and hurried forward even by that former habit and askesis of his, though it be without his own will. Even if a man's mind is curious after Yoga, he overpasseth the outer Brahman in the Word. The Yogin earnestly striving is purified of sin; perfected by toil of many births he arriveth at his highest salvation. Greater than the man of askesis is the Yogin, and greater I hold him even than the men of Knowledge, and than the men of works he is surely greater: a Yogin, therefore shouldst thou be, O Urjoona. And of all that are Yogins I deem him to have most yoga who, with his inner Self taking refuge in Me, hath faith in Me and loveth Me and worshippeth Me.

SRI AUROBINDO

THOUGHTS AND GLIMPSES*

(*New Series*)

GOD has made this world a field of battle and filled it with the trampling of combatants and the cries of slaughter and struggle. Would you filch His peace without paying the price He has fixed for it?

Sacrifice, sacrifice, sacrifice always, but for the sake of God and humanity, not for the sake of sacrifice.

Selfishness kills the soul; destroy it. But take care that your altruism does not kill the souls of others.

Very usually, altruism is only the sublimest form of selfishness.

* * *

Meanness and selfishness are the only sins that I find it difficult to pardon; yet they alone are almost universal. Therefore these also must not be hated in others, but in ourselves annihilated.

Nobleness and generosity are the soul's ethereal firmament; without them, one looks as an insect in a dungeon.

Let thy virtues be not such as men praise or reward, but such as make for thy perfection and God in thy nature demands of thee.

Altruism, duty, family, country, humanity are the prisons of the soul when they are not its instruments.

* * *

Break the moulds of the past, but keep safe its genius and its spirit, or else thou hast no future.

* From old writings

Revolutions hew the past to pieces and cast it into a cauldron, but what has emerged is the old Aeson with a new visage.

The world has had only half a dozen successful revolutions and most even of these were very like failures; yet it is by great and noble failures that humanity advances.

Distrust perfect success, but when having succeeded thou findest still much to do, rejoice and go forward; for the labour is long before the real perfection.

There is no more benumbing error than to mistake a stage for the goal or to linger too long in a resting-place.

* * *

Sannyasa has a formal garb and outer tokens; therefore men think they can easily recognise it; but the freedom of a Janaka does not proclaim itself and it wears the garb of the world; to its presence even Narada was blinded.

Hard is it to be in the world, free, yet living the life of ordinary men; but because it is hard, therefore it must be attempted and accomplished.

When he watched the actions of Janaka, even Narada the divine sage thought him a luxurious worldling and libertine. Unless thou canst see the soul, how shalt thou say that a man is free or bound?

All things seem hard that are above his attained level and they are hard to his unaided effort; but they become at once easy and simple when God in man takes up the contract.

* * *

Selfishness is the only sin, meanness the only vice, hatred the only criminality. All else can easily be turned into good, but these are obstinate resisters of deity.

SRI AUROBINDO

SAT*

WHAT is Truth? said Pilate confronted with a mighty messenger of the truth, not jesting surely, not in a spirit of shallow lightness, but turning away from the Christ with the impatience of the disillusioned soul for those who still use high words that have lost their meaning and believe in great ideals which the test of the event has proved to be fallacious. What is truth,—this phantom so long pursued, so impossible to grasp firmly,—that a man young, beautiful, gifted, eloquent and admired should consent to be crucified for its sake? Have not circumstance and event justified the half-pitying, half-sorrowful question of the Roman governor? The Messenger suffered on the cross, and what happened to the truth that was his message? The Christ himself foresaw, it has never been understood even by its professors. For a hundred years it was a glorious mirage for which thousands of men and women willingly underwent imprisonment, torture and death in order that Christ's kingdom might come on earth and felicity possess the nations. But the kingdom that came was not Christ's; it was Constantine's, it was Hildebrand's, it was Alexander Borgia's. For another thirteen centuries the message was—what? Has it not been the chief support of fanaticism, falsehood, cruelty and hypocrisy, the purveyor of selfish power, the key-stone of a society that was everything Christ had denounced? Jesus died on the Cross, for the benefit, it would seem, of those who united to slay him, the Sadducee, atheist and high priest, the Pharisee, zealot or hypocrite and persecutor and the brutal, self-seeking, callous military Roman. Now in its last state, after such a lamentable career, Christ's truth stands finally rejected by the world's recent enlightenment as a hallucination or a superstition which sometimes helpfully, sometimes harmfully, amused the infancy of the human intellect. This history is written in too pronounced characters to be the exact type of all messages that the world has received, but is it not in some sort a type of the fate of all truth? What idea has stood

* From old writings

successfully the test of a prolonged and pitiless enquiry? What ideal has stood successfully the test of time? Has not mankind been busy for the last fifty years and more denying almost all that it had formerly affirmed? And now that under the name of rationalism or materialism the denial has shaped itself into some form of workable practical affirmation, mankind is again at the work of denying its denial and rearranging—but this time doubtingly —its old affirmations. The scepticism of Pilate would therefore seem to have some excuse in a recurrent human experience. Is there, indeed, such a thing as truth,—beyond of course that practical truth of persistent and material appearances by which we govern our lives, the truth of death, birth, hunger, sexuality, pain, pleasure, commerce, money-making, ease, discomfort, ambition, failure and success? Has not indeed the loftiest of our philosophical systems declared all things here to be Maya? And if Maya is illusion, a deceit of the thinking consciousness, then indeed there can be no truth anywhere in the world except that indefinable Existence which we cannot comprehend and which, after all, Buddhism, not without logic and plausibility, setting it down as another and more generalised *samskāra*, a false sensation of consciousness in the eternal Void, denies. And yet man is so constituted that he must follow after truth whether it is attained or not; something in him secretly masterful, essential to his existence, forbids him to be satisfied with a falsehood; the moment it is perceived or even believed to be a falsehood, he rejects it and the thing begins to crumble. If he persists in his rejection, it cannot last. Yesterday it was, today we see it tottering, tomorrow we shall look for it and find that it is no longer. It has passed back into Prakriti; it has dissolved into that of which it was made. For *sraddhā* is the condition of all existence in consciousness and that in which *sraddhā* is denied, ceases to have existence, whether here or elsewhere, *na caivāmutra no iha*. It is not, neither in this world nor in another. We may not unreasonably infer from this importance and this imperative necessity that Truth does really exist and everything is not illusion. If then Truth is always escaping our hold and leaving us to disillusionment and derision, it may be because we have niether formed any clear conception of what Truth itself is nor taken hold of the right means by which it can be grasped. Let us leave aside, for a while, Buddha's world of *samskāras*; let us put aside, packed away in an accessible corner of the brain, Shankara's gospel of Maya, and start instead from the old Vedantic beginnings, OM TAT SAT, That (Brahman) is the thing that Is, and *Sarvam khalvidam Brahma*, verily, *all this*, everything of which we are aware, is Brahman. It

is at least possible that we may return from this inquiry with a deeper idea both of Samskaras and of Maya and may find that we have answered Pilate's question, discovering the nature and conditions of Truth.

I am speaking of the fundamental truth, the truth of things and not merely the fact about particulars or of particulars only as their knowledge forms a basis or a help to the discovery of fundamental truth. The fact that a particular sort of contact makes me uncomfortable is nothing in itself except in so far as it throws light upon the general causes of pain; the nature, origin and purpose of pain is the fundamental truth that I seek about the sensational reaction to contact. This law of pain, moreover, is not so fundamental as the truth about the nature, origin and purpose of sensation and contact themselves of which pain is a particularity, an example or a modification. This more fundamental truth becomes again itself particular when compared with the truth about the nature, origin and purpose of Existence of which sensation and contact are only particular circumstances. In this we arrive at the one fundamental truth of all, and a little consideration will show that if we really and rightly know that, the rest ought and probably will reveal themselves at once and fall into their places. *Tasmin vijnāte sarvam vijnātam*, That being known, all is known. Our ancestors perceived this truth of the fundamental unity of knowledge and sought to know Sat first, confident that Sat being known, the different *tattwas*, laws, aspects and particulars of Sat would more readily yield up their secret. The moderns follow another thought which, also, has a truth of its own. They think that since being is one, the knowledge of the particulars must lead to the knowledge of the fundamental unity and they begin therefore at the bottom and climb upwards,—a slow but, one might imagine, a safe method of procession. "Little flower in the crannies", cries Tennyson addressing a pretty blossom in the wall in lines which make good thought but execrable poetry, "if I could but know what you are I should know what God and man is".[1] Undoubtedly; the question is whether, without knowing God, we can really know the flower,—know *it*, and not merely its name and form or all the details of its name and form. Rupa we can know and analyse

[1] Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
Little flower—but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

by the aid of science, Nama by the aid of philosophy; but Swarupa? It would seem that some third instrument is needed for that consummation of knowledge. The senses and reason, even though aided by microscopes and telescopes, cannot show it to us. *Na sandriśe tiṣthati rūpam asya*, the form of That stands not in the ken of sight. Mind and speech are not permitted to lead us to it, *na vāg gachhati na mano*. Even the metaphysical logic of Shankara stops short of that final vistory. *Naiṣā tarkeṇa matir apaneyā*, this realisation in thought is not to be obtained by logic. All these various disabilities are due to one compelling cause; they are, because Sat, the truth of existence, Brahman, the reality of things which fills and supports their idea and form, is beyond the recognisable and analysable elements of of idea and form. *Aṇor aṇīyān atarkyam aṇupramāṇāt*. It is subtler even than elemental subtlety and therefore not to be deduced, induced, inferred or discovered by a reasoning which proceeds from a consideration of the elements of name and form and makes that its standard. This is a truth which even the greatest philosophers, Vedantic or un-Vedantic, are apt to forget; but the Sruti insists on it always.

Nevertheless mankind has for some thousands of years been attempting obstinately and with passion to discover that Truth by the very means which the Sruti has forbidden. Such error is natural and inevitable to the human consciousness. For the Angel in man is one who has descended out of light and bliss into this darkness, twilight and half-light here, the darkness of matter, the twilight of vital consciousness, the broken half-light of the mind, and the master impulse of his nature is to yearn passionately towards the light from which he has fallen. Unable to find it at once, too little *dhira* (calm and discerning) to perfect himself patiently, it is natural that he in his eagerness should grasp at other instruments meant for a limited utility and straining them beyond their capacity compel them to serve this his supreme object—which is always to recover the perfect light and by that recovery to recover also what dwells only in the perfect light —the perfect and unfailing bliss. From this abuse of the parts of knowledge have resulted three illegitimate human activities, of which Philosophy, Religion and Science have severally made themselves guilty, the disputatious metaphysical philosophy of the schools, the theology of the church and the scientific philosophy of the laboratories. Philosophy, Religion and Science have each their appointed field and dominion; each can help man in his great preoccupation, the attempt to know all that he can about Sat, about Brahman. The business of Philosophy is to arrange logically the

eternal modes of Sat, the business of Religion is to arrange practically and vitally the personal relations of Sat, the business of Science is to arrange observantly and analytically the particular forms and movements of Sat. They are really necessary and ought to become so to each other; and, if they who recognised proper limitations and boundary marks could by their joint activity help man to his present attainable fullness; but by a sort of intellectual land hunger, they are perpetual invaders of each other's dominion, deny each other's positions and therefore remain unprofitably at war through the human ages. Finally, all three after illegitimately occupying each other's fields insist on snatching at a knowledge of which they are all equally incapable,—the essential nature of the world, the secret reality of Sat, the *uttamam rahasyam* of the Brahman. This error, this confusion, this *sankara* or illegitimate mixing of different nature and function is the curse of the Kali and from it arises much, if not most, of the difficulty we experience as a race in escaping from this misery and darkness into bliss and light. It is part and a great part of *Kali kalila*, the chaos of the Kali.

India has always attempted, though not, since the confusion of Buddhism, with any success, if not to keep the three to their proper division of labour—which, with the general growth of ignorance, became impossible—at least, always to maintain or reestablish, if disturbed, some harmony between them. Of this attempt the Gita is the standing monument and the most perfect example. To see the confusion working in its untrammelled force,—and it is only so, by isolating the disease from the modification of curative forces, that we can observe, diagnose and afterwards find its remedy,—we must go to the intellectual history of the European continent. There have been, properly speaking, two critical periods in this history, the Graeco-Roman era of philosophic illumination previous to Christianity and the era of modern scientific illumination which is still unexhausted. In the first we see the revolt of Philosophy (with Science concealed in her protecting embraces) against the usurpation of Religion. We find it, after achieving liberation, in its turn, denying Religion and usurping her sacred prerogative. In the modern era we see Science this time emerged and adult, keeping Philosophy behind her, in revolt against Religion, first liberate herself, then deny Religion and usurp her prerogatives, then, or as part of this final process of conquest, turn, deny and strike down her lofty ally and usurp also her ancient territory. For if Science has scorned and denied Religion, she has equally scorned and denied Metaphysics. If she has declared God to be a barbarous myth, a fiction of dreams and terrors and longings and denied

us the right of communion with the Infinite, equally has she declared Metaphysics to be an aberration of the ideative faculty, a false extension of logic and denied our right to recognize any metaphysical existence or anything at all which cannot be judged by or inferred from the results of the test tube, the scalpel, the microscope and the telescope. Neither, however, has she herself hesitated to dogmatise about the essential nature of existence and the mutual relations of its general modes, matter, life, mind and spirit. But for our immediate purpose it is only necessary to note the result in either of these eras of these tremendous usurpations. The result of the usurpations of Philosophy was that mankind flung itself with an infinite sincerity, with a passionate sense of relief into the religion of an obscure Jewish sect and consented for a length of time which amazes us to every theological absurdity, even the most monstrous, so that it might once more be permitted to believe in something greater than earth and to have relations with God. The old philosophical spirit was torn to pieces with Hypatia in the blood-stained streets of Alexandria. Theology usurped her place and discoursed blindly and foolishly on transubstantiation and consubstantiality and one knows not what other barren mysteries. So far as philosophy was allowed an independent existence, she was compelled to do not her own work but the work of Science; so we find the schoolmen elaborately determining by logic and à priori word-fencing questions which could only be properly determined by observation and analysis. For Theology, for Mediaeval Religion herself did not care for this field of knowledge; she had no need for scientific truths, just as the Jacobin Republic had no need of chemists; in fact she guillotined Science wherever its presence attracted her attention. But all injustice—and that means at bottom all denial of truth, of the *satyam* and *ritam*—brings about its own punishment or, as Religion would put it, God's visitation and vengeance. Science liberated, given in her strenuous emergence the strength of the Titans, avenges herself today on her old oppressors, on Religion, on Philosophy, breaks their temples, scorns their gods and prophets and seeks to deprive them even of the right to existence. That was the result of the Graeco-Roman illumination. And what will be the result of the scientific illumination, the modern enlightenment, the fiery triumph and ardent intellectual bigotry of the materialist? It is too early to foresee the final denouement but unformed lines of it show themselves, obscure masses arise. Mysticism is growing obscurely in strength as Science grew obscurely in strength in the Middle Ages. We see titanic and mystic figures striding out of the

East, building themselves fortresses and points of departure, spreading among the half-intellectual, capturing even the intellectual—vague figures of Spiritualism, Mental Science, Psychical Research, Neo-Hinduism, Neo-Buddhism, Neo-Mahomedanism, Neo-Christianity. The priests of Isis, the adepts and illumination of Gnosticism, denied their triumph by the intervention of St. Paul and the Pope, reborn into this latter age, claim now their satisfaction. Already some outworks of materialism are giving way, the attack grows more insistent, the defence more uncertain, less proudly self-confident, though not less angry, contemptuous, bitter and intolerant; the invaders increase their adherents, extend the number of their strongholds. If no wider and higher truth intervenes, it would almost seem as if the old confusion in a new form might replace the new. Perhaps an Esoteric Society or a Spiritualist Circle of High Mediums will in a few centuries be laying down for us what we shall think about this world and the next, what particular relations with Gods will be permitted us, what Influences or Initiates we shall worship. Who knows? The fires of Smithfield may yet reblaze to save heretics from perdition.

These are not mere fantastic speculations. The history of humanity and the peculiar capacities of that apparently incalculable and erratic thing, human nature, ought to warn us of their possibility or at least that they are not entirely impossible, in spite of the printing press, in spite of the clarities of Science. No doubt with so many Schools and Academies, such spread of education, never again would enlightenment be dimmed and the worship of gods and ghosts would in the end amuse none but the vulgar. We must accept these things as possible and examine why they are possible. This reaction is inevitable because Philosophy, though exceedingly high and luminous, tends to be exclusive and narrow and Science, though exceedingly patient, accurate and minute, tends to be limited, dry and purblind. They are both apt to be as dogmatic and intolerant in their own high way or in their own clear, dry way as Religion in her way which is not high but intense, not clear but enthusiastic; and they live on a plane of mentality on which humanity at large does not yet find itself at perfect ease, cannot live without a struggle and a difficulty in breathing. They both demand from man that he shall sacrifice his heart and his imagination to his intellect, shall deny his full human nature and live coldly and dryly. You might just as well ask him to live without free breathing. The mental world in which we are asked to live, resembles what the life of the humanity would be if the warmth of the sun had diminished, the earth were growing chill and its atmosphere

were already too rarefied for our comfort. It is no use saying that he ought to live in such an atmosphere, that it will improve his mental health and vigour. Perhaps he ought, though I do not think so, but he cannot. Or rather the individual may,—everything is possible to individual man,—but the race cannot. The demand can never be allowed; for it is a denial of Nature, a violation of the great Mother, a deplacement of her eternal facts by the aridities of logic; it is a refusal of the Truth of things, of the *Satyam Ritam*, and if it is persisted in, it will bring its own revenges. Philosophy and Science, if they are to help mankind without hurting it and themselves, must recognise that man is a complex being and his nature demands that every part of that complexity shall have its field of activity and every essential aspiration in him must be satisfied. It is his nature and his destiny to be *āptakāma*, satisfied in his desires, in the individual and in the race—though always in accordance with the *satyam*, the *ritam*, which is also the *sukham* and *sundaram*, not lawlessly and according to aberrations and caprices. It was the great virtue of the ancient Hinduism, before Buddhism upset its balance and other aberrations followed, that it recognised in principle at least this fundamental verity, did not deny what God insists upon but strove, it does not matter whether perfectly or imperfectly, to put everything in its place and create a natural harmony.

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SRI AUROBINDO

THE INDETERMINATE OUTLOOK*

IF the Absolute represents the finality or the ultimate Truth of all things,—that which we are in fact seeking through our advancing knowledge,—then this seeking must needs be guided by a greater understanding and awareness of the manifold Nature of that all-containing Reality. At first however, our finite and limited intellect is overwhelmed by the vastness of this omni-existent Absolute, which elusively escapes one's grasp; and hence the natural reaction is to push aside any consideration of that, at least until one has gathered sufficient evidence and data to approach it confidently. In the meantime we dismiss it summarily by calling it an Unknowable or the Indeterminable,—something to be left aside for the time being. Yet we are always hesitant of making the decisive approach, —perhaps lest we expose too strikingly the vast lacunae in our already established knowledge, which is by no means so secure. It is obvious that the mind of man is reluctant to disturb its fixed orbit of ideas, to face an infinite Reality of which it can only speak in terms of finite determinations,—which are only such fragments of the Whole as it can seize on; or in terms of collective indeterminates, which represent the variable relation between groups of determinate seizable fragments; or perhaps in terms of the infinite Indeterminable itself, meaning the vast Unknowable that appears to be beyond all determination by us. And so our consideration of what should form the strongest basis of our knowledge is pushed further away. This hedging however, from that which to all things is the central Reality, only accentuates the fact that this latter, whose wholeness is veiled from us, merely escapes an inquiry based solely on the intellect.

From our past highest sources of knowledge—such deposits of an ancient Wisdom as have, for example, been intelligibly preserved in India,—two outstanding and time-valued truths have come down to us, which can be confidently taken as the cornerstones of our advancing knowledge. Firstly here is the revelation regarding the Nature of the Absolute as a triple-

* *The Life Divine*, Volume II, Chapter I, pp. 1-4 (2nd Edn.)

stranded Reality,—that is, (as far as our traditional verbal expression can approximate to it), an infinite Existence, an all-extensive Consciousness and a pure immaculate Delight of Being. And secondly it has been succinctly revealed that the all-extensive Consciousness of the Divine is above all a dynamic Force—a Consciousness-Force as it is called—which is the true Creator, the divine creative Power of the worlds. Yet we have to face the fact that these supra-physical truths are not only remote-seeming to the reality of the world, but that by all appearances they are even opposed to the actuality of things. This does not mean that this knowledge itself is something abnormal or even alien to man's practical worldly attitude and activity. Rather it indicates the wide gulf that exists between what we regard as normal and what we are bound to concede is a wider and higher (though as yet rare) vision of Reality; and this points to the fact that it is man's present means of knowing that are restricted and limited.

While this insufficiency is of course a deep-rooted difficulty that cannot be so readily overcome, we have to be certain that it is not an impossible undertaking for man to outgrow his present limitation. If, as a deeper analysis of the situation shows, the resistance to a change in our human outlook, is due to a central opposition in man's mental make-up, then at least we should ascertain the nature of the opposition, and the possible means of eliminating it, rather than ignoring the issue completely. In this respect the most practical approach can be made by considering first the real cosmic root and nature of the Unknowing which forms the present texture of our life and outlook. By this means we can discover the true relation between our insufficient sphere of existence and the vaster Reality, which nonetheless we cannot yet reach or demonstrate. Its Realness in fact must be something that has to be grown towards.

From man's present restricted standpoint it is quite understandable (by virtue of the very restrictedness), that the condition of Existence should appear to us in the form of a trenchant duality. On the one side there is the mere glimmer of knowing of which man's consciousness is a leading integer and on the other the indefinable Vast or the Unknown, apparently shut off from what we know the world to be. Although man's scientific advancement is ever seeking to unravel this Unknown, yet it is always and solely by means of instruments themselves that belong to the Unknowing, and hence he is failing to lay the necessary firm and stable foundation of knowledge,—producing only a shifting indeterminism. Thus at present science is groping through a fog of uncertainties where even his former absolutes and direc-

tional signs have vanished. It has become clearer that one is faced implacably with a real Ignorance on this side and an ever elusive Knowledge beyond,—and this is how the seeming duality of the world and that which lies beyond has come into being. Yet must we accept this condition of incompleteness as an insurmountable fixture of man's life and outlook, or even as ineradicably inherent in the nature of the world? Even apart from the contrary claims and assurances of the world's seers and spiritually enlightened, it is beginning to be more generally realised as a logical necessity and outcome of the world process, that a real reconciling Truth exists at the heart of things, which is detached from the endless conflicts and oppositions set up in man and projected by him around. Such a Truth clearly belongs to that which stands above man and the world,—which the ancients had discovered as the dynamic creative Power upholding the Cosmos, and which at the same time has entered into all things and maintains therein what we realise to be essentially an integral cosmic harmony and complex inter-related activity.

Man however, constantly pulled by the contraries of error and truth, evil and good, imperfection and perfection, cannot readily realise the simple fact that mind,—his chief instrument of knowing—actually stands at the meeting-place of these contraries. This is not to say that these latter are the creations of mind, but that man himself is at the juncture of two great opposites—the Ignorance and the Knowledge, which we have already observed; and hence it is man's real task to reconcile them without denying the existence of one or the other. If this were not the case, man would be aware only of one state of existence undisturbed by the intrusion of anything alien or conflicting in his life and ideas. He would be as content, for example, as the animal world out of which he has emerged. In fact the more man advances in knowledge the more he becomes aware of the larger field of Ignorance in which he lives, and of the vast stretches of Knowledge he has yet to bring into the actuality of the world. Of all earthly creatures man is the one discontented being, who is conscious of his own incompleteness, and is ever spurred on by that awareness to fulfil a greater purpose in life.

This lack of fixity between man's present condition and the greater Reality of which he is indubitably a part, but from which he is undoubtedly separated, only corroborates the fact that man himself is not a static being. He is even as science reminds us, the growing-point of an evolutionary branching that connects him inseparably with the animal and the plant worlds. Can it be then that this apparently blind sprawling mass of life that we call evolution, really has an aim, as we are implying, and that it is urging man—either

in spite of or in co-operation with the fact that he is himself endowed with a free-will—towards a higher status of being? This certainly presupposes a higher guiding Consciousness beyond man's, but of which our sense-bound awareness gives no direct evidence. And this introduces the crucial question whether man really accepts a transcendent Will above his own self-will as the guiding Power of his evolutionary progression. At the same time there is the counteracting condition of the world which offers us no support for the belief in a progressive evolution, though there is no logical scientific reason to suppose that the movement of evolution has ceased to make progress,—unless we put our own time-scale into Nature's and call the present retrograde condition of man's world an indication that Nature has finished or abandoned her work. A more feasible explanation is that the present condition might even be a forceful indication that Nature is surpassing man, especially if he chooses not to keep in step with a higher Law and direction to which Nature herself is subject. Obviously the failure to see a transcendent Purpose in evolution is the result of our own superficial and self-centred seeing of the situation. For even as science probes deeper into Nature, it is revealing a more co-ordinate and inter-related pattern therein, which seems to represent a dynamic cumulative process that continually and progressively builds up more and more complex aggregates of life or higher forms of being.

Let us then rather admit the gaps in our own state of knowledge, and try to see first the condition of things as they exist in themselves. At this stage of our scientific endeavour it has become clear that we encounter at least three principal separate laws in Nature's working, which have to be taken into account. Firstly there is the law of the material atom itself, secondly the law of life in its inter-action with matter, and thirdly the law of mind, of which the phenomenal appearance of these inter-acting processes as seized upon by our own mental consciousness, is a significant part. When we regard the outer world purely from the material angle we see mainly a mechanical determinism therein, where a rigid inertia or cohesion of substance represents the central fact of persistence that is inherent in matter. Regarded purely from the vitalistic level, on the other hand, the phenomenal world begins to reveal a cumulative drive or pressure, through a widely devious but nevertheless directed movement, instigated by an insatiable urge for change—as though the whole process of Nature is being driven towards some secret goal of which it is itself unaware. Finally from the mental, or more precisely the vitalistic mental viewpoint, the element of chance or of infinite possi-

bilities—a random freedom that appears to be outside the individual's control—comes more dominantly into man's picture of the world, in consequence of the increasing interplay of mind with life. As it has turned out this innate freedom of mind has become narrowed into an individualised free will, which though an asset if rightly directed, has for the most part become a disconcerting interference in man's search for Truth, in that it has predominantly imposed its own self-centred law even in face of other natural laws that should all act co-ordinately. In our observations of Nature's working therefore, it is essential that the three basic actions of matter, life and mind, which form the interwoven structure of the world, must be seen both separately and in their intimate interrelation, if we are to comprehend the Whole and the interconnection of its parts. This means that we have to see clearly the working and purposive aim of the principal strands of the whole complexity,—the laws of matter, life and mind with, at the same time, the co-ordinating Truth that stands behind them. This can only be achieved when we disentangle our own superficial seeing from the constant flux of Nature in which we are ordinarily too greatly immersed to see anything beyond; and this means standing back from the process in order to obtain the necessary detachment and clarity of discernment. This again can only be done effectively when we have discovered a wider consciousness (that is not part of, rather unattached from, the triple mesh of Nature's outer functioning), which is already present though latent as the soul-being, which can open us to the wideness of its own higher source and origin above. The law of this inner consciousness, unlike the intellect, is that of a direct knowing by identity, a comprehensive seeing that combines detachment with a penetrative insight. It is essentially a seeing of existence itself, as the experience of one's own existence.

Through this new orientation and intimate identity we not only come to realise that a greater Consciousness exists behind Nature, but that this is also the true creative Force that guides, directs and sustains the whole cosmic movement,—and forms in fact what we can only call the divine creative Consciousness. Even the simple admission of the presence of the divine Consciousness active in and behind the world, opens us to a wider realm and domain beyond the narrow shut-in aperture of our ordinary perception of things. Our perspective and standpoint are thus completely changed. No longer are we tied helplessly and rigidly to a fixed centre with a limited range of perception, but gain a new manifold awareness. Yet the mind itself, accustomed to the closed and narrow half-lit vision of its normal

outlook, finds it difficult to accept this change of consciousness. The darkened mind shrinks from the Light which it sees as wholly alien to the present nature of things, and hence concludes that a new consciousness cannot belong to the terrestrial order of life. But if we analyse this resistance more carefully we find that it is man's dominating ego—the narrowed 'I'-consciousness of his being—that really resents the change. This resistance becomes the more acute when the very dominance of the ego in man's being is threatened by the influx of a wider consciousness to which it naturally refuses to submit its power. And this is the case at the present critical juncture when a new Consciousness—that of the growing psychic or soul-being in man—is struggling to emerge and manifest itself. This psychic element, as the direct seed of the Divine Bliss and Nature, is a separate entity from mind, but at present its influence in us is excluded from the outer acting part of our being by the narrow mental centre or ego. Thus our ordinary mental outlook disregards its presence completely, and it is only rarely that the true psychic influence and penetrative light can obtrude into the surface consciousness. When this happens however, we feel the calm and the wideness and the secret joy that belongs to a Consciousness beyond our petty narrowness of outlook. It reveals the secret connection with the Divine Consciousness; but naturally the ego-dominated mind, being reluctant to admit this inner relation of which it is not a direct participant,—since it holds itself apart from it—makes the soul appear an alien entity.

This state of affairs, which dominates all our outer activity, the ego stubbornly upholds. But there is a larger more expansive part of mind that is ordinarily closed to us, but which is yet free of the domination of the ego. This is the higher mind which, though itself not the true spiritual sphere, is yet open directly to reflect the truth and luminosity of the spiritual Reality itself. It is by our progressive opening to this higher and infinitely wider zone of mind that we can break down the restriction of the ego-hold over us —both in the individual and in the collectivity—and so release the psychic element in humanity, which unbound can grow naturally and freely towards the divine Truth. By this approach we are able to develop the needed universal and global outlook, by a natural process, a growing from within outwards, which is in direct alignment with the whole development and unfolding of Nature. We should thus become possessed by a consciousness that is able to identify itself more directly and naturally with the Divine Consciousness, which embraces and enters all things and which the immature psychic being in us is striving to bring into our active awareness and nature. Fo

the central aim of the earth's evolution is, as Sri Aurobindo sees it, to bring forth that new principle which man realises inwardly as soul, and transcendently as the Light and Bliss, the Truth and the Perfection, thus preparing the way for the actualisation of man's ancient ideal of a divine Life and order in the world. But these terms and concepts are as yet vague to us, and need to be clarified by a wider Knowledge and a clearer discernment into the Reality of the spiritual Truth and its dynamic Nature.

At first however, we have to face the fact that immediately we begin to approach the subject of spirituality we become aware of a trenchant duality, bearing with it an incessant train of contraries and oppositions which we cannot reconcile with the Perfection of the higher Reality. This is due to an incapacity which we have already recognised to reside in the active and fundamental nature of mind; and because mind is our chief instrument of knowing this direct influence in us is all the more accentuated. Thus we have to recognise the fact that these reactions of mind give no indication of the validity of the higher truths, rather they expose the need to train the mind by widening and heightening its range. And this cannot be achieved, as psychoanalysts claim, merely by excavating the deposits of mind's past stumbling growth out of the animal subconscient nature in a mis-directed search for the inner soul. Rather it is by exploring the higher elevated zones which man can already reach, that we can truly lay bare the possibilities of man's advancement and higher growth. The cosmic truths that were spoken of at the beginning of this essay—those pertaining to the Nature of the Absolute and its divine creative Power—are two fundamental revelations that have come down to us purely through the opening of mind to its higher light-suffused plane. It is on such truths, which have already stood the tests of time and experience, that a more secure ground, a firmer and more productive basis even, can be laid for a higher and wider elevation of Knowledge that extends into the vast uncharted realms of the spiritual Reality.

N. PEARSON

THE TOUCH UPON THE CENTRE

A GREAT deal of the enlightened thought of the modern age has been for some time preoccupied with the ideal of the integration of human personality. The discovery of complexes, schizophrenia, the concept of the gestalt etc. in modern psychology is part of an insistent process towards the coordination and integration of the different parts of man and the forging of them into a harmonious and dynamic unity. Much of the evil of life, much of the rankling bitterness of differences and discords, much of the wastage of human energy, the warping of human faculties and the wreckage of noble hopes and ideals is, indeed, due to a conflict of the members in the human being. Light and darkness, truth and falsehood, good and evil, the impulse of giving and the impulse of grabbing, all sway in a shifting balance in the psychological make-up of almost every man. The saint is hidden in the sinner and peeps out of him sometimes, as a ray of light glimmers out of a sombre cloud; and the sinner frets or drowses in the saint and surprises him by his sudden sallies. This conflict of the members must be resolved, if man aspires to become a harmonious whole, a homogenous entity, unified in his being and organically manifold in his self-expression.

This urge towards integration of personality derives from the overmastering urge towards general unity. Paradoxically, man desires nothing so insistently today as unity, though he advances towards it through an accentuation of divisions and discords,—blindly, fumblingly, but undoubtedly under an irresistible impulsion. Those who are not attached to any particular aspect of the modern life, or wedded to any of the current ideologies or patterns of action, cannot fail to be struck by the almost desperate attempts at unity made by every civilised people on the face of the globe. But the more mankind is pressing towards unity, the more it is bumping against the divisions and discords that keep multiplying upon its way. Are not these dissonances and disharmonies a prophetic prelude to the unity and harmony preparing behind the veil—a last, lurid flare-up before the final extinction?

But before there can be unity in men, there must be unity in man. The

individual must lead and blaze a trail for the collectivity. The inner individual integration must precede the general outer unification. The war and mutiny in the members of the individual must first give place to a concord and a concerted functioning. And once this unity is achieved, be it only in a few individuals, it will naturally reproduce itself in others, as all individual conquests and achievements tend to reproduce themselves in the collectvity. But so long as the inner conflict continues in man, it will be impossible to resolve the outer conflicts,—the anarchic forces of hate and rancour and violence and lusts of all kinds will persist in tearing down the structure of human society and destroying all that is great and noble in its culture and civilisation. It is, indeed, preposterous to strive for an outer unity and harmony without first caring to eliminate the inner forces that create discord and disharmony; and the futility of such an ignorant endeavour has never been so evident as today.

How can one integrate one's personality? Modern psychology has been grappling with the problem for sometime past, but without any very appreciable result. The experiments and hypotheses of Jung come sometimes very near touching the skirts of a solution, and then stray and drift away, as if lost in a fog of intellectual preconceptions and misgivings.

The solution of the problem lies in the discovery of the central being of man. It is not enough to know the parts of his nature; we have to know that to which the parts belong and in which they cohere. If man is not a mere aggregate of disparate parts, rolling along in a current of chances and necessities, there must be in him a living centre or nucleus which not only sustains and holds together the different members, but develops and guides them towards a definite end. That centre is not a mere element among other drifting elements, but the master of its instrumental organism. It is a conscious being, a soul, which prepares from behind and perfects its means of self-expression, its executive nature. It is the indestructible essence of man and carries in it an essential significance, while its nature of mind, life and body has only an instrumental or expressional value and utility. The failure to distinguish between this essential being of man and his expressional nature is responsible for the barrenness of modern philosophy and its pitiful incompetence to throw any effective light upon man's path of evolution. Modern philosophy limits itself to the expressional and fugitive parts of man, and denies or ignores the essential. Modern psychology too does not distinguish between the essential and the expressional parts of man, and that is why, in spite of its admirable researches and some quite

remarkable discoveries, it has failed to reach the kernel of man's personality and seize the secret of its integration. For the most part, it busies itself with the superficial movements of human nature, and even when it dives into its ulterior motives and hidden springs, it does not dive deep enough to touch the elemental energies and the basic structure;—its limitations preclude its diving so deep. And the heights of the consciousness of man are, of course, far beyond its ken. Besides, not commanding a synthetic view of the whole being and nature of man, and being ignorant of its very centre, creative, coordinating and controlling, it gropes about from theory to theory, from hypotheses to hypotheses in the pride of its overweening empiricism, only to be beaten and baffled at every step by the elusive complexity and intricate working of its subject.

It would not have been so, if modern philosophy and psychology had not turned their backs upon the spiritual heritage of the Western culture. Philosophy in the West has, indeed, broken away from the spiritual and religious traditions of the past, from the deepest teachings of Pythagorus and Plato and Plotinus, and remodelled itself upon the modern materialistic science. It is just the reverse of the ancient method in which science received its inspiration from philosophy and conducted its experiments in the light of an assured knowledge; and philosophy followed in the wake of spiritual experience,—intuition leading the inquiries of the physical mind as well as the speculations of the intellect. Psychology, which was regarded as a branch of philosophy and carried on its investigations of the human mind upon the basis of certain essential truths of God and man and Nature, was comprehensive in its outlook, synthetic in its methods and sure of its steps;—there was always a solid core of authentic knowledge to draw upon, a body of verified truths acting as an effective check upon the vagaries and fickle curiosities of the mind. The doubts and denials of the physical mind were not allowed to masquerade as the dictates of reason and repel the promptings of intuition. But the physical mind being in the ascendant in man today and his inner perceptions dimmed and discouraged, philosophy, psychology, art, poetry, all are reduced to browsing in the rank fields of Matter and creating out of the dubious data of the senses and the turbid thoughts of a mind enthralled by the fugitive things of life. So long as this infatuation with the central being of man cannot be discovered, and the integration of his personality will remain an unrealised ideal.

It is, therefore, indispensable for the integration of the personality of man that his central being or soul be discovered and brought forward to be the

overt guide of his evolving nature. When that is done, a harmonious development of his whole being will become as natural a process as the blossoming of flowers or the rhythmic dance of the stars. All the conflicts of his members, progressively resolved, will culminate in a sweet and happy concord spontaneously expressing itself in the outer conduct of his life. It is such a concord, inner and outer, that can be the base of peace, an active and creative peace, in the multiple relations of life. A perfect concord by the integration of the members of the human personality will be a triumphant revelation of the soul in the conditions of material existence. But the soul cannot be realised and revealed by the unaided power of the human mind. The human mind, by the sincerity of its aspiration and surrender, can effect an opening in the consciousness, somewhat loosen the knots of the separative ego, impose a preliminary discipline and control upon the warring members, and thus prepare the being for the reception of Grace, but it is Grace alone that can touch the soul into a perfect efflorescence. It is a mysterious or mystic process, in as much as it passes the limited comprehension of the human mind; but it is none the less real for it, and tangible in its results. There can be a reflection of the freedom, purity and peace of the soul in the serene and purified intelligence of man, but a reflection is not the reality, it cannot give the living and abiding sense of infinite freedom and immortality that the latter carries in it. The opening of the bud of the soul requires not only a purification and preparation of the unregenerate human being, but a touch or pressure from within or above, a hatching, as it were, which is a supernatural action of an inscrutable and incalculable potency. In some exceptional cases, this touch falls upon the soul directly, and not through any human intermediary or Guru, as in the case of Buddha or Christ or Sri Ramkrishna; but in all other cases, the divine Grace acts through a Guru who has realised some kind of union with the Infinite. It is true that the power of Grace is intrinsically infinite and infallible, but in its transmission, it is conditioned by two things: the nature and consciousness of the intermediary or Guru, and the opening and receptivity of the disciple. The limitations of the former can, however, be surmounted by the absolute sincerity and unstinted surrender of the disciple, which make the divine Grace lean down and directly take up the charge of his spiritual life. But when Grace incarnates itself in a human form and mediates between the Divine and the human being, there can be no end to the disciple's possibilities of realisation. The Avatara represents one of the highest peaks of spiritual attainment in the evolving conditions of the material life, and acts at once as a beacon and a pioneer in the world.

When the touch of the human embodiment of Grace falls upon the soul of the disciple, there is a general blossoming of his whole being and a quickening of all its faculties, and not a mere tension towards the peace and silence of the Immutable. The function of the soul is "to work on each plane so as to help each to awaken to the true truth and the Divine Reality".[1] "It is a portion of the Divine Mother passing through the experiences of the Ignorance in order to arrive at the truth of its being and be the instrument of a Divine Manifestation and work here."[2] Personal salvation is not the exclusive preoccupation of the soul, but of the human mind, wearied of the world and pining for the freedom and peace of the Beyond. The soul or the psychic being, touched into a full awakening, turns and surrenders the whole being to the Divine with love and devotion, so that it may be purified and transformed, and converted into a revealing channel of the divine glory. The central awakening precedes and infallibly prepares the general awakening and transfiguration. The movement is so natural, so spontaneous, so inevitable, that it does away with the necessity of all strenuous labour or tapasya, unless, of course, there is a part that resists the change and clings to its own obscurity. Every arduous tapasya or ascetic self-repression indicates an obstinate resistance somewhere in the being, and, though necessary, is not a pure psychic movement. The sunlit path is the path of the psychic, which starts from the centre of the human being and winds along through the different members, integrating and unifying them in a single aspiration for the Divine. The sunlit path is the path, not of extinction, but of an integral fulfilment. The touch of Grace upon the centre of man's being produces a vernal splendour of divine perfection.

It is this touch upon the centre that is the secret of the Mother's work of transformation. It is the touch of embodied Grace, of divine and dynamic Love; and it falls direct upon the soul, making it break into a multi-petalled beauty through its instrumental nature of mind, life and body. In her Prayer of March 31, 1917, the Mother implored the Supreme to grant her the power to make the heart of man leap at the touch of "Thy divine breath." In fact, this had been her constant prayer to the Supreme.

"Thou hast heaped Thy favours upon me, Thou hast unveiled to me many secrets, Thou hast made me taste many unexpected and unhoped-for

[1] *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. IV.
[2] *Letters of Sri Aurobindo*, Vol. IV.

oys, but no grace of Thine can be equal to this Thou grantest to me when a ıeart leaps at the touch of Thy divine breath."

'Tell me, wilt Thou grant me the marvellous power to give birth to this dawn n expectant hearts, to awaken the consciousness of men to Thy sublime 'resence, and in this bare and sorrowful world awaken a little of Thy true 'aradise?"

This touch of Love works in an unpredictable way. It does not follow any et method of purification or adopt a moral and rational means of edification.)ften it seems to take no notice of the gravest defects of a nature, but oncentrates rather upon the strongest and most evolved parts of it. Those parts then begin to blossom; bright and vibrant energies enter ıto them; a new poise and harmony settle in them and spread to ıe other parts. The light that radiates from the centre exposes ıe obscurities and ugliness of the parts that are still unregenerate –the twists and seams and sores show in all their hideousness. It is ot by chastisement, and penalties, but by a quiet and steady exposure to .ight that the purification proceeds and the perverted energies are won over) the side of the Divine. But sometimes it is the reverse way: the touch alls painfully upon the parts that rebel and resist,—it is the touch of purifying re; the flaming wrath of the Mother, the red glare of Mahakali, burns up ıe refractory elements. Grace thus wears its double aspect of compassionate enignancy and fierce and destructive violence in its dealings with the hard nots and complexes of human nature. But it starts its operations with the soul nd acts in the light of an all-seeing knowledge. Because its eye is at once on ll needs of the being, it is both indulgent and exacting, deliberate and dras- c, and specific and general in its action. Its stress is always upon an un- ampered flowering of the swabhava or self-nature of the central being of ıan.

That appearances are extremely deceptive and that the Mother's love oes not care in the least for appearances, is proved abundantly in the life of ıe Ashram. It so happens sometimes that a man comes and prays for admis- on. To all appearance, he is a rather ragged specimen of humanity. Will he e able to do this difficult Yoga?—one wonders. He seems to have no capa- ty whatsoever. In the outside world, he would have been condemned) passing his frustrated life as an object of pity and contempt. It would ıve been, indeed, a hard life for him there,—without hope and without

effort. But the Mother accepts him, even while perhaps she refuse admission to many others apparently much more deserving than he. Sh accepts him and her Love touches his being, and lo and behold! a new lif wells up in him, an unwonted spirit of self-offering and devoted service c the Divine inspires his whole being, and a new horizon opens up before hi mind's eye. Where there was darkness before and despair, and a cripplin sense of incapacity, light begins to dawn and an unknown strength fills h members. Along with a firm will, new faculties develop in him; and if person watches him, he will be amazed to find that he has not only prove promising and useful, but even begun to show a certain talent in one c more directions. In a few years he is a changed man with a change consciousness; a renovated being glowing with hope and ardour and asp ration, and advancing with confident steps towards his inevitable destin of a divine fulfilment. Not that his path has all been a bed of roses. H has had struggles and brief but perhaps acute periods of gloom and agon —stretches of dreary desert to cross in the night; but he has always felt Presence enveloping him and a strong, kindly Hand leading him. Th Mother's Love is now his only support and sustenance, and her smi kindles the sun even in the midst of his being's midnight. With her as h guide, a creature of time has become a pilgrim of eternity.*

This is the miracle of the Mother's touch upon the centre of our bein —the touch which is the secret of the integration of our personality and th only means of a harmonious perfection and fulfilment of our life.

RISHABHCHAND

* There have been many cases like this, which afford un interesting psychologic study from the standpoint of the integration of human personality.

IS IT ECLECTICISM?

(2)

UNDER the caption "Sri Kapali Sastry on Sri Aurobindo" a reply to my article "Is it Eclecticism?" that appeared in the *Advent* of last August is given by the same critic Sri S. S. Raghavachar in the *Vedanta Kesari* (January). The writer makes a serious attempt to maintain the position he first took up, amplifies his criticism and in his reconsideration of whatever flowed from his pen he has tried to remove the 'ambiguity' I had referred to by stating that his critical remarks proceed from his dissatisfaction with the work of the disciple and not with the *Magnum Opus* of the Master himself. I welcome this concession contained in the last part of the sentence, as *The Life Divine* is an admirable production which even the worst opponents of Sri Aurobindo's teachings dare not dispose of lighly even when they could not or would not appreciate it *in toto*. But this does not mean that the critic accepts the teachings of Sri Aurobindo, the Yoga, the Path, the Goal of mankind, and other kindred matters on which he has written many volumes which put together are all very much larger in bulk than that of the *Magnum Opus*. His admiration for *The Life Divine* is not in question, but he has stated it because he wants it to be known that he does not find fault with that work and nothing more. If he has dissatisfaction with the disciple's work, he has his own reasons which he has stated in categorical terms. To mention them and to give adequate answers would require as much space as, if not more than double the space, taken up for writing the 'booklet' that has so much offended his (critic's) philosophical sobriety as to unsettle his equable poise in the 'fabrication' of the Daniel's judgment. If I refrain from taking notice of his posers, I have reasons which I shall presently state. I shall later on deal with some of his statements regarding the Master's philosophy and the many schools of philosophy in the West or in India.

The first and foremost reason for my viewing the criticism as not meriting refutation is this: I have stated in the book animadverted upon as well as in my article in the *Advent* the exact nature and purpose of the work viz. to

explain throwing light on the Fundamental Concepts of Sri Aurobindo's Teachings. The title of the 'booklet' itself must make it evident to any one who is not unwilling to see. Now to extend the connotation of the title to a title that would suit the convenience of the critic to attack viz: 'Introduction to the Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo' is unfair, baseless; and that even after my explaining the position to insist that somehow the folly was mine, at any rate I should or must fall into the error of the critic's choice, is invincible prejudice; if not, what else?

Again, the critic himself states "It is too slender to be taken as furnishing an adequate introduction to the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo". For this reason also, *Lights on the Fundamentals* is not the same as an adequate introduction to the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo. There is another important point that the critic has thoroughly missed. He seems to assume that this 'booklet' purports to be a summary or resume of *The Life Divine* which is not the case. Nowhere have I stated in the book itself or later in my articles that it is an introduction to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy as presented in *The Life Divine*. I took care to explain '*darśanebhyah*' in the plural (p. 90). On the previous page it will be found that this work is 'extract from the teachings of Sri Aurobindo' (p. 89). By that I meant other works also including the *Secret of the Veda*. If I did not mention the authority from Sri Aurobindo's works for every statement I made it was not necessary as mine is the responsibility for whatever I stated. This is because I had a system formed long ago in my mind that could be based on the traditional wisdom of the ancient mystics from the Rig Vedic times traversing the scriptures of an earlier age, followed by the Upanishads and Agamas of the different sects, and Puranas down to our own times. The formation of such a system in my mind was facilitated by Sri Aurobindo's references to the Vedic, Vedantic and Tantric teachings in the various contexts of the subjects he was dealing with. Since the short treatise was intended to expound the central concepts, it was considered advisable to publish it as an appendix to '*The Four Powers of the Mother*', translated by me into Sanskrit verse. As *The Mother* was mainly intended for Sadhaks and the matter was what related to Sadhana, a clear idea of the fundamental concepts of the Master's teachings being found in the booklet, the Master approved my idea of printing it as an appendix. This fact I had already mentioned. At least now, I hope the critic will see the correctness of my view and his initial error which led him to supplement the title by adding his words to explain what he considers I should have meant. Questionable is the journalistic ethics for a reviewer to indulge in

such luxuries. Ancient standard was fairly high and scrupulously maintained by shastraic writers. Old Kumarila demurs to such steps, saying, *yāvad vacanam vācanikam*, 'the meaning actually expressed must be conveyed' and nothing is needed to supplement it.

I might as well stop here having pointed out the erroneous basis of the critic's contention as well as what he calls the main charge that I have not dealt with Sadhana. What I have stated is enough to show that he goes to a wrong shop, knocks and knocks at the wrong door and not finding what he wants quarrels and raises hue and cry instead of blaming himself for want of circumspection before undertaking the unedifying job.

But I proceed to make some observations on some of his statements about the 'eclectic patches', 'Western philosophers' and a few others. What I write here is not quite adequate but is sufficient to point to the direction of my views on the curious and mistaken notions of the critic in respect of some of these topics. Before proceeding I must first dispose of a simple question which shall not be left in suspense. I recognise as genuine the critic's admission that he is not dissatisfied with the Philosophy of *The Life Divine*. I assume therefore that he recognises the synthetic harmony therein as an outstanding fact and that only in my miniature reproduction of it (i.e. *Life Divine*, according to him which I have explained in my denial) it turns out to be an untenable combination of "eclectic patches". Well, it is something to know that he has nothing to say against *The Life Divine*, though he does not expressly state that he accepts the position of man and the goal before him as portrayed in *The Life Divine*; he has conceded so far, and that indeed serves his purpose of tearing to pieces my 'eclectic patches' over which he has very much to quarrel. But one can very easily see that the eclectic bugbear of the critic threatens the teachings of Sri Aurobindo as a whole and as represented in the booklet in question. For whatever scriptural authority was referred to by me whether Veda or Agama, Upanishad or Purana, has been based upon the Master's explicit and lucid statement to the same effect. I stress this fact because the critic strikes at the root of the case I have presented, as an easy step to show that there is no theological tradition to support the seven worlds etc. I shall presently show how the critic has fallen into the error of what seems to him as eclectic. Let me first quote Sri Aurobindo in regard to the world-order: in the *Doctrine of the Mystics* prefaced to the Translation of the Hymns of the Atris, he says: "We have the same Cosmic gradation as in the Puranas but they are differently grouped,—seven worlds in principle, five in practice, three in their

general groupings" (*Arya*, Vol. II, p. 100). I need not quote in detail the descriptive statements made about them and the intricate world-system of the Vedic mystics which takes a gross shape in a simplified form in the Puranas, and has received adequate treatment in the hands of Sri Aurobindo there, as also elsewhere. But the critic would divine "eclectic patches" of the Vedic, Upanishadic and Puranic patterns in the harmonising of the sevenfold, fivefold and threefold principles and groupings and if the terms used are explained, as for instance, *vijñāna*, or *Janaloka*, with an eagle's eye, he would pounce upon it tearing it to pieces labelling them as fanciful interpretations without any basis in what he would call 'Theological Tradition'. I realise and readily concede that the critic writes from genuine conviction and long-held strong views on the matter of theological conceptions that are in vogue in certain quarters, but not universal. But I hold that these views have an erroneous basis and the conviction is one born of equally erroneous notions.

In India the Veda is admitted on all hands to be the fountainhead of all spiritual Wisdom; and the other scriptures, Upanishads, Tantra or Purana are not unconnected departures from it, but are 'in their essential build and character transmutations and extensions of the original vision and first spiritual experience'. What Sri Aurobindo writes on the real character of these ancient texts stresses the fact that "the Veda gave us the first types and figures as seen and formed by an imaged spiritual intuition and psychological and religious experience. The Veda became to the later scholastic and ritualistic idea of Indian priests and pundits nothing better than a book of mythology and sacrificial ceremonies." This is so in the face of the fact that all the scriptural texts, Upanishads and others proclaim the Vedas as the supreme authority held in great reverence and even Puranas themselves acclaim in portions that they are enlargings, *upabṛhmaṇam*, upon the Vedic truths.

Once we grasp this fact about the character of these different lines of development of sacred literature in India we no longer accept the idea that they are all unconnected departures from the original source in the Vedic texts.

If therefore the seven worlds of the Puranas are traced to the seven Cosmic principles of the Vedic mystics, we are giving a factual interpretation on the authority of the Vedic and Puranic texts themselves. The same applies to certain references I made to the Taittiriya text which also continues the Vedic tradition and uses a language that is in accord with that of its age. Only when we treat these texts as totally unconnected deviations

the 'patches' has room to rear its head. One important fact that must be borne in mind in this context is that the names used in the Purana signifying the nature of the worlds to which they apply are suggestive and are our main clues to unveil the secret; for instance, when the Puranas say that Narayana reposes on Ananta I would presume that Ananta is the Infinite Prakriti on which he rests, and if a learned critic for the sake of criticism questions me as to the propriety of giving that fanciful meaning while according to his theological and puranic tradition Ananta is Sesha, serpent, the thousand-headed hydra and nothing more, I have no answer but a pitiful look at the stalwart. In the same way *Jana* in *Janaloka* suggests birth or creation which proceeds from Ananda according to the plain texts of the Upanishad.

Now I shall pass on to another interesting argument of Sri Raghavachar against the idea that Tapas is the creative force, or conscious force and that it leads to anthropomorphism. I stand aghast, my readers would laugh out in disgust. I need not quote him in full, nor is it worth an answer on his terms, I can very well imagine he is not a scoffer of the scriptures, but here he uses whatever argument he can summon to his convenience for demolishing my statements. The pity of it is that he forgets for the time being that the Vedas proclaim that by Tapas, He, Prajapati, created, *sa tapo'tapyata*. The idea occurs frequently in the Brahmanas and the Upanishads. Sri Aurobindo expounds the principle of Tapas-force as exclusive concentration, in his *Magnum Opus* over which the critic has no quarrel. In my Rig Bhashya Bhumika, published last year, I explained the term occurring in the second verse which I reproduce here as it contains a short but straight answer, as if in anticipation of Sri Raghavachar's criticism. The Supreme "wears the sound-form for body and creates the universe by exhalation and lives with tapas for his life-breath." On this my note runs as follows (I give only the relevant lines): "As the Creator he assumes the form of the primordial Sound, *nāda*, the creative Logos; this Sabda is his body; his life-breath is Tapas which is Consciousness as Force. To show that the Tapas (as explained) is inherent in him an *anthropomorphic* figure is pressed into service on the strength of scriptural authority, that he exhales and the worlds are created. Creation is the natural, effortless outcome of that poise of the Lord, Prabhu."

Sublime ideas, truths that transcend the senses and the reason founded on sense-data have always been expressed in images and figures and symbols from immemorial times, not only in the ancient scriptures of this land, but

by Mystics all over the world. Only the 'rationalist' raises an ineffective objection against the use of images etc. But the one solid reply that can be given to it is Sri Aurobindo's answer (*Vide* his Letters, First Series) to Leonard Woolf's criticism of Mysticism where in the concluding passages he says that there is no deceitful cunning in using metaphors and symbols as in the simile of focus which is surely not intended as an argument but as a suggestive image.

In modern times thinkers of first rank, even when their system is not labelled spiritual philosophy, have had recourse to figures and images to carry home their conceptions or subtle perceptions, if you like. An appreciative critic of Bergson remarks: " He is occasionally obscure by the squandered wealth of his imagery, his analogies and his illustrations; he has an almost semitic passion for metaphor." Thus, though Sri Aurobindo employs figures and images in illustrative terms to explain what is meant by Tapas and Ananda, he has taken care to deliberate upon them in the language of metaphysical reasoning in his *Magnum Opus*, and for the sake of a clear grasp of the terms he has described that "Tapas is the energising conscious power of Cosmic being by which the world is created, maintained and governed; it includes all concepts of force, will, energy, power, everything dynamic and dynamising. Ananda is the essential nature of bliss of the cosmic consciousness and, in activity, its delight of self-creation and self-experience."

Now I shall proceed to an important aspect of the critic's reasoning in caricaturing as untenable eclectic patches what we consider as a synthetic harmony. I have already mentioned the nature of the Upanishads, Tantras etc. that are subsequent to and continuation of the teachings of the Vedic Wisdom in spite of their variations in form; and they all branch out from the spirit of the original Scripture. If I find in the *Vākyapadīya* of Bhartrihari something about the Logos I recognise that it has its basis in the Rig Veda, in the *nityā vāk*, the Eternal Word, of Rishi Virupa in the 8th Mandala, or another line from the Valakhilya hymns of the Rig Veda, *vageva viśvā bhuvanāni jajñe* leaps to my mind and if my listener has ears he will have no difficulty in admitting the truth that the Logos of Bhartrihari is of Vedic origin. Or I turn to the Upanishads. I recognise the Logos in the Pranava, Akshara, Omkara, Udgitha variously described and explained therein, or when I look into the Pancharatra, Shakti Tantra or Shaiva Agama, I recognise the same Logos in the primal *nāda*, *ādya spanda*. The primordial throb which is the same with slight difference in name—but more expressive of the significance—as the *nityā vāk*, of the Rig Veda or Udgitha of the

Chhandogya, or Omkara of the Mandukya; well, in the same manner, I can show that the so many 'isms', *vādas*, that hang loosely in the learned mind of the critic as patches without fusing are mostly in their essentials directly traceable to the Upanishads. I carefully omit the Veda here as it is not in vogue for purposes of theological and spiritual discussions, but simply kept in the lumber room though with great respect in theory. But let me state that these *vādas* have for their support the Shruti texts each in its own way for its purpose. But I do not undertake to quote the relevant texts here on which these Acharyas and their *vādas* depend. This much I say here that if I find spiritual monism or *parināma vāda* or any other, I recognise them as rising from the sacred texts. And if any critic comes forward and preaches to me learnedly that what I say is taken from the spiritual monism of Shankara, I have no option but to laugh and pity my preacher just as any one would if he is told that the Gayatri is taught in the Chhandogya. That the Chhandogya refers to Gayatri is a fact, but originally it is in the Rig Veda of which the learned preacher is obviously ignorant. Similarly there is a passage in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad *tat kena kam paśyet*. When I read it I find that the Shruti refers to an unalloyed Monistic Reality that could be experienced; if I say so my critic would say this is the "ism" of Shankara.

Now that I have finished with the eclectic worm, I should like to bring home the exact nature of this 'eclectic' stuff by the illustration of a picture in which various colours and curves figure within the framework on the canvas and any one with eyes on his head could see that it is a picture drawn on a canvas and that the substance and the materials used can be recognised, including the wooden or metallic frame. But a mind which is not inclined to appreciate a coordinated whole can very well say that the green colour is borrowed from the parrot of that garden, the azure from the half-clouded sky, the curve is copied from the distant landscape, the material for frame from the forest etc. In cases of such judgment which resolves a harmonious synthesis into intruding patches, the superior arbiter is a developed conscience and rectitude of the scrutinising eye; more is a matter of opinion of competent minds that count. Again I am speaking of a tree in its entirety—root and branch, fruit and foliage and stem, but my critical friend's mind, riddled as it is with patches of my system, considers each part separately and thinks this is timber in its raw state, that is bark useful for therapy, those are flowers for decoration and so on with the result that their parts, usefulness or different uses cannot be coordinated and so are incongruous elements. Let me quote a passage from Sri Raghavachar in this connection

which burns to ashes all the fancied 'patches' that are supposed to make up the whole. "One finds in Sastry's work the emergent evolution of S. Alexander, the intuitionism of Bergson, the spiritual monism of Shankara, the Realism of Ramanuja and Madhava, the Brahma Parinamavada of Bhaskara and Kashmir Saivism, the Logos of Bhartrihari, the Sakti concept of Tantra and the 'Lord' of popular Theism." Well, Sri Raghavachar could go on with many more 'isms', for all is grist that comes to his mill and he is too learned, certainly. But the fact must be told that Sastry was singularly unaware of these systems, except perhaps a superficial idea and second-hand information obtained from later writers who knew or from cheap literature; and it was his fortunate ignorance of these 'isms' in their original and pristine purity that enabled him to study and understand the scriptures in their true set-up while he was hardly out of his teens nearly half-a-century ago, and later led him to appreciate and follow Sri Aurobindo on the one hand and on the other hand equipped him for an upright appraisal of the 'isms' of the West (of the East also), not their downright condemnation as is alleged by Sri Raghavachar.

Sri Raghavachar is emphatic, even extravagant, in the use of his sharp tongue when he fancies error in others and is generous in his righteous indignation at my basic remark about western metaphysics in general. His comments and stretchings and strictures, as are quite often the case with him, are offensive and beside the mark. The actual line I used is this: "The *bulk* of metaphysical thinking in the West differs fundamentally from the philosophical systems in India." This is the beginning of the passage that has offended his sense of fairplay and justice to western philosophers and he quotes the names of James, Bergson, Kant, Plato etc. Well, it is amazing how he fails to see that I did not mean or say that the West has not progressed and is not slowly or rapidly giving up materialistic thought realising the limitations of Reason. The names he mentions are, certainly worthy names. James was the son of a Swedenborgian mystic and himself contributed a deal to psychology and of all his works the *Variety of Religious Experience* was an eye-opener to the scientist who till then would not believe in the phenomena of a non-material existence which is in some way connected with the physical world. Bergson was rightly styled the 'David destined to slay the Goliath of Materialism' and his *Creative Evolution* is the first masterpiece of the Century. Much more can be said here. But what do all these prove? Can all this be an answer to the question 'Is there a philosophic tradition in the West as is assumed in this land that a philosophic system

is an attempt at intellectual presentation of supra-intellectual truths, perceived or experienced by the system-builder'? Sri Raghavachar is loud that mine is a definite error; but he must know I am in good company.

A word about Reason. It has an important place, and is the highest instrument the human mind is endowed with, but it has its limitations. When I was speaking of Sri Aurobindo's system building, I did accord a radical place for experience, for Realisation and added that certain articles of faith, become theories or dogmas, but I did not mean or say that they shall not or can not be put in terms appealing to Reason. Otherwise there would have been no *raison d'être* for *The Life Divine*. I did not undertake to establish the system or reason out the position and in that connection I spoke of what I may call the starting assumptions or dogmas.

I agree that 'there is clearly a need for a criterion to eliminate pseudo-realisations'. Here Reason can take an important part, but how far it can be trusted to solve the difficulty depends upon so many factors some of which pertain to the office and guidance and limitations of Reason itself.

Before putting down the pen for the present, I wish to add that Sri Raghavachar's zealous and loyal reference to *Vedanta Kesari* is understandable but superfluous. I have something very definite to say about the attitude of this esteemed Monthly in this instance, but I refrain from doing so, because of my long-cherished pleasant feeling and regard for the Journal whose noble services to the community are rendered along non-sectarian lines quite in keeping with the great Name that has been the source of inspiration to so many of us—Sri Ramakrishna-Vivekananda.

I note Sri Raghavachar's non-violent ventilations about my 'violence' 'discrediting the accuser', 'the unphilosophical temper' etc. I also note that he does not 'accuse me of absolute originality' and also the occasional spicings of cheap satire which I welcome and appreciate coming as they do from a serious-minded innocent accused.

I trust Sri Raghavachar with his fund of humour would take it all as an instance of 'A Roland for an Oliver'. Indeed, I intended my article to be in the nature of the ancient saying *yādṛśo yakṣastādṛśo baliḥ*, 'as is the Yaksha, so is the offering.'

T. V. KAPALI SASTRY

REVIEWS

(1)

A Life-Sketch of Srimant Pratapseth and a Brief Account of the Advaitic System of Thought. By *G. R. Malkani.* Rs. 2/8

Many of us had heard of the Indian Institute of Philosophy at Amalner, East Khandesh, but had no definite idea about the object of this Institute and its activities. There are so many universities in India teaching Philosophy, what is the necessity of having a separate Institute for it? Professor Malkani rightly thought that people should know what the Institute stands for and he wrote this book. A Life-Sketch of the founder has made the account full and graphic. It is nothing uncommon for rich men having philanthropic ideas for making the best use of their wealth; some establish schools or colleges, some hospitals, some temples; but that a rich mill-owner should have the idea of founding an Institute for research and study in philosophy seems to be rather strange.

Pratapseth was born in a village, Mohanpura in Jaipur state in Marwar and was adopted as son by Manakshet of Chopda in East Khandesh district of the Bombay Presidency, belonging to the same Agarwal community. He attended a local Marathi school, but did not make much progress. The most important event which influenced all his later life occurred just at this early age. The *munim* Gokulkaka, the manager of his father's estate, desired that this promising young man should acquire some knowledge of music. He was in search of a suitable teacher when some one suggested the name of master Savalram Naik, a poor professional Brahmin, who was out of employment at this time. He was appointed as a teacher of music to young Pratapseth, on a salary of Rs 2/- only per mensem. He started with this musical business, but soon took an opportunity to give the boy a wider and more comprehensive education through Marathi literature. One day he placed a more practical problem before Pratap. Would he like to have the kind of education which would make him a successful man in life, or would he have the kind of education that would have nothing else for its reward

than the highest happiness? Would he have success in *pravritti* or in *nivritti*? The boy chose the more ambitious ideal, namely *nivritti*. That was the beginning of a form of contact between these two individuals that lasted to the end, and united the two persons, the guru and the disciple, in unbreakable ties of personal attachment. The Guru spoke, and the disciple listened. That became the main occupation of the two. The whole programme of the day centred round these talks, and there was nothing more interesting for the two seekers of truth. After the death of his father Pratap opened a spinning and weaving mill at Amalner; this reduced the contacts, but not the interest of the two persons in each other and in their pet subject. The mill stands to-day as a monument to the resourcefulness of Pratapseth, and the mother of all the charitable institutions that have grown around it. It has contributed to no small extent to the wealth and the business of the town, increased the population, and added to the amenities of the place.

Pratapseth could not stay for long periods at Chopda after the starting of the mill at Amalner. When he was away, he received and wrote letters to Master Savalram in which philosophical questions were raised and answers were received. One auspicious day, Pratapseth and Master Savalram went to spend some quiet hours at Oonavadev, a sacred spot in Satpura mountains about 8 miles from Chopda. It was on this occasion that Master Savalaram broached the subject of starting an Institute of Philosophy at Amalner where they could impart their knowledge of the truth to young men of promise, who could be depended upon to make the system of advaitism, as expounded by Sri Sankaracharyya, a living force in Indian thought and religion. Neither of these two persons had much of an education. Master Sevalram, who was both the spiritual and the mundane teacher of Pratpseth, knew not a word of English. His knowledge of Sanskrit was neither deep nor thorough. He was not well-versed in any of the other systems of Hindu thought. What knowledge he had was mostly derived from a few Marathi translations. That shows how the Vedantic teaching of Shankara has deeply entered into the Marathi tradition. Different provinces in India have followed different lines. In Karnataka we have the predominance of the Shakti cult, in Tamil Nadu Vaishnavism, in Bengal a combination these two. The time has now come to gather all these streams into a mighty Ganges of spirituality that will redeem not only India but the whole of humanity. The founders of the Institute at Amalner seem to have had some such grand ideal in the back of their minds, but they had not the intellectual and spiritual equipment to accomplish it. But Master Savalram had a per-

sonal magnetism which could powerfully influence certain persons within a limited circle. One of them was Pratapseth and another is evidently the author of the book under review. The latter writes: "Master Savalram and Pratapseth were bent upon this mission. They wanted to make others see what they thought they saw; and they were fully confident that once a person saw what they saw, he would be a new man, a converted man. His learning would be automatically yoked to a new purpose, and to a further refining of his understanding." This is what has actually happened to our author. He came to the Institute as one of the batch of first fellows. He was afterwards sent to England to get a degree in Philosophy so that the Institute in his charge might rise in status and prestige. He has now yoked all his scholarship and intelligence to the purpose of propounding Shankara's Advaita. The Institute came into existence in 1916.

It must be said to the credit of Professor Malkani that he has strictly followed in the footsteps of the great Acharya. He admits that reason cannot give us knowledge of Reality. He says: "The sensible objects are *given* through a form of intuition, and reason elaborates our knowledge *about* them. But what is not so given is a closed book to reason, and reason has no natural function with regard to it." "Evidently, in the absence of any natural means, such as perception or inference, we can only fall back upon, and have recourse to a supernatural means. That is *śruti* or revelation." "But Sruti is not enough. We must use reason to interpret sruti-texts themselves to determine the right meaning." But if reason has no natural function with regard to Reality how can it be relied on to give a right interpretation of the Sruti? Indeed it is this fundamental self-contradiction which vitiates Shankara's Advaita. He has his personal view about Reality, he uses reason to show that the Srutis give the same view. In fact what he gives is not valid reason but only a show of it and by that people are deluded just as a person can be deluded to take a rope for a snake. Let us illustrate our point by considering one important sruti text which Shankara has interpreted to support his view That Brahman never takes a multiplicity of forms, so the world which consists of names and forms must be an illusion. The Chhandogya says: "By knowing earth one can know all earthen pots, the different earthen pots are said to be deformations of earth, but really the earth remains essentially unchanged in all the forms it takes." The simple meaning is that Brahman assumes many forms and itself constitutes the world of multiplicity but in this process it does not undergo any change or deformation, it remains the same Brahman in all its manifestation. Here there is nothing to

suggest that this world of forms is non-existent or an illusion. The earth is real, the earthen pots are also real, when the pots are destroyed, only the form disappears. But Shankara interprets this Sruti to mean that Brahman never assumes any forms but is only *said* to have forms. Indeed, reason can interpret any text in various ways, and a sruti which has its source in direct spiritual experience can be interpreted only by spiritual experience and nothing else.

Though Prof. Malkani says that reason cannot give us higher knowledge, nowhere in his book he has referred to the sruti texts, but has tried to prove the illusoriness of the world by reasoning. The type of logic he uses is a very ancient thing; we find it well illustrated in Zeno's famous dialectic by which he sought to prove that all motion is an illusion. When an arrow moves, at every moment it rests at some point, thus it is resting always and there is no motion. One example from the book will suffice. Immortality of the soul is one of the insoluble problems of philosophy. But our author finds it very simple. Take the analogy of sleep. It has a meaning only in relation to waking. If a person never wakes from his sleep he will never know that he slept. Thus death has a meaning only if there is life before it and after it. There are some people who find satisfaction in these tricks of words and thought as people take interest in card tricks. There is a show of reason where there is no reason at all. In that way the book illustrates how Maya works. Professor Malkani says that all objectivity is illusory, all knowledge and reasoning are illusory, so his book with all its arguments and he himself are illusions, an illusion trying to prove by an illusory attempt that this world is an illusion.

We fail to see how such an illusory philosophy can give us the highest happiness and help us to make our life noble and worth living. If the world is an illusion and only this knowledge can save us, why live in the world and act in it? Shankara himself did not renounce action. His life was a flagrant contradiction of the teaching that only complete renunciation of work can bring true knowledge and liberation. He was one of the greatest workers the world has ever seen. What we need today is not a repetition of the preaching of the illusoriness of the world. We have to accept the true Advaita which asserts the reality of the world as well as the reality of Brahman of which it is the manifestation. The world has a meaning and a purpose, we have to find that out and attune our life to it, only then we can reach the highest goal.

A.B.

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Sri Aurobindo and the Soul Quest of Man. *By Nathaniel Pearson. G. Allen & Unwin Ltd.* Sh. 10-6 *net.*

The arrival of this beautifully produced book is a great piece of good fortune for seekers after the universal vision. Than Sri Aurobindo there has been no greater spiritual teacher in recent years since, perhaps, Ramakrishna died 60 years ago, and his influence is little accessible, outside India. But Sri Aurobindo is another matter; by culture and education he is equally planted in both West and East and is the perfect interpreter of each to the other. What is more important for the many of us is that he is a great spiritual Light that we can contact and study in our own language and idiom.

Sri Aurobindo made no concessions to superficial interest, or what might be called the entertainment value of the spiritual quest. He taught and wrote always at a high level for the utterly sincere person, and his most important books are serious reading which require solid study: because he left no ideas unexplored in his exposition they are usually long and detailed. It is an enormous help if, preliminary to the study of such important writings, the interested aspirant can get a general notion of what it is all about, and here comes Mr. Nathaniel Pearson to give it him. As a disciple for some years under the Master himself, and as a present member of the Ashram in Pondicherry, Mr. Pearson presents clearly and in short order an intensive, but extremely readable study in 128 pages of the first twelve chapters of *The Life Divine*, which is unquestionably the Magnum opus of Sri Aurobindo. To quote from the jacket—"Nathaniel Pearson provides a clear and illuminating exposition of the basic metaphysical principles of Sri Aurobindo" and it is, therefore, of particular use to people interested in the philosophical and metaphysical aspects of what Sri Aurobindo offers to the world. For the mystic his book is a close and helpful reconciliation of the light of mystical perception with the ideas which this perception takes when given form and definition in words and philosophies.

Although one has the faith that Light penetrates "when the time comes" it must be the case that the time can be shortened by the self-directed efforts of the seeker—otherwise we fall into the grip of predestination and the fatalism that is such a convenient vehicle for spiritual laziness and material

inertia. There is a dynamism about Sri Aurobindo's presentation of the eternal truths which accords perfectly with our Western spirit of the adventurous in all fields of life. There has always been a reluctance in the West to "write off" the material aspect of living, which seems to be so generally required by many Indian paths and yogas, as a preliminary or even a necessity to establishment in the pure Light of the spirit. It appears to us that it is not for nothing that our material bodies and surroundings can be brought to beauty, effectiveness, and purity by faith, devotion, effort and sincerity, and we recoil from the need for fierce austerities and a basic aversion to material life. Sri Aurobindo's Integral Yoga is a different matter entirely and its basic material is supplied by the daily life as it is lived by, and unrolls before, the aspirant. Mr. Pearson says—"But if the true destiny of man's existence is to manifest the Divine Reality here in this earthly life—and no other goal can be envisaged—then the individual is indeed the living point through which the Divine can act and ultimately bring about the emergence of Perfection in the world."

It is true that the individual's chief and central task is to get behind and beyond his ego; the ego is firmly entrenched in the error of its own self-sufficiency and absolute importance and this must be broken down or transcended. Not until this is done in some measure can we become aware of the true cosmic unity behind the veil of external appearances and come into actual and dynamic contact with the "peace that passeth all understanding" and which provides the fulfilment and crown of life. This ineffable state—called *Sat-chit-ananda*, or existence-consciousness-bliss in the Hindu systems—quite literally is beyond the understanding of the ordinary mind and is a matter either of realisation or non-realisation. To anyone who has experienced it, it is a fact and a reality. But no amount of arguments or mental persuasion will give a person a clue to what it is if it has not been experienced.

The Path is an individual matter indeed, but the interdependence of human responsibility is a tremendous fact of nature and a condition of human creation. All our seekings and longings for peace and harmony on earth can be of no avail unless as individuals we seek to fulfil our personal spiritual destinies. Mr. Pearson says—"It is only through the full recognition of this divine destiny of the individual soul on earth that the persistent conflict and division in human thought and endeavour can eventually be resolved and harmonized". The very basis of this knowledge is the bringing down into our "ordinary" life of the light that will purify and make the

knowledge effective. The divine spark secreted within man, which is of the same substance as the Light that comes down to unite with it, is the real link with God, and is His true instrument in the action and progression of the world—and of each individual within it.

Mr. Nathaniel Pearson has done a great service to us.

A. L. CRAMPTON CHALK

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